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SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY
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COURIER

WILLIAM LESCAZE

THE RISE OF MODERN DESIGN IN AMERICA

ARTHUR J. PULOS
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A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY ARCHITECTURAL HOLDINGS

VOLUME XIX
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Contents

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES COURIER contains articles relating to the holdings of the Syracuse University Libraries, most especially the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections, and to the interests of the Library Associates membership.

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Foreword

On behalf of the Syracuse University Library Associates, I should like to say what a very great pleasure it is to welcome the *Courier* back into print. It began publication in 1958 and appeared regularly until two and a half years ago. Henceforward, it will come out twice annually, in the spring and in the fall.

This issue, which comes to you in a new cover design and format, is unusual also in that it deals almost wholly with the career and influence of a single person, namely the architect William Lescaze (1896-1969), a major part of whose papers are held by Syracuse University. The articles have been written by the participants in the Lescaze Symposium, which took place in Syracuse in February 1984 under the auspices of Syracuse University. In future publications, the *Courier* will return to presenting articles related to diverse aspects of the broad range of the University's George Arents Research Library for Special Collections.

We are happy to announce, too, our expectation of producing within the pages of this and subsequent *Couriers* a description by subject of rare books and manuscripts held by the Syracuse University Libraries. The present issue begins this program appropriately with an essay by Werner Seligmann, Dean of the School of Architecture at Syracuse University, about the more important of our twentieth-century architectural holdings. These include, besides the Lescaze collection, the papers of Marcel Breuer, Pietro Belluschi, Harley J. McKee, Archimedes Russell, and Ralph Walker. Dean Seligmann also identifies the more notable architectural research materials which are available here to the working scholar.

The exhibition of William Lescaze models, drawings, and photographs, which was held concurrently with the symposium at the Everson Museum in Syracuse during February and March and at the National Academy of Design in New York in June and July, will go on tour at a later stage this year. Future venues will include Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and thereafter, cities in the Midwest and West of the United States. As plans now stand, the exhibition will then be moved to Europe.

Chester Soling, Chairman
Syracuse University Library Associates

Model of the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society building, from the exhibition "William Lescaze and the Rise of Modern Design in America", Everson Museum, Syracuse, February 1984 (Photo: Christopher Gray).

William Lescaze and the Rise of Modern Design in America

Preface

This issue of the *Courier* presents the proceedings of the symposium "William Lescaze and the Rise of Modern Design in America", held at the Everson Museum, Syracuse, New York, on February 15th and 16th, 1984. Sponsored by the Syracuse University School of Architecture, the symposium was organized in conjunction with an exhibition of the work of the architect and designer William Lescaze. The purpose of the symposium was to place the career of William Lescaze into the varied contexts of the American cultural milieu and contemporary worldwide architectural movements. The symposium's agenda included two featured lectures by recognized scholars in the field of Modern Architecture and Design, prepared presentations by four young scholars, and an informal panel discussion with invited respondents.

This two-day event was the result of the combined efforts of a number of individuals and institutions. On behalf of the School of Architecture I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge with gratitude those responsible for its success. Robert Bruce Dean served as curator of the exhibition and played an active role in organizing the symposium. Werner Seligmann, Dean of the School of Architecture, deserves particular mention for his continued support of this project. Ronald A. Kuchta, Director of the Everson Museum, very kindly provided a setting for the symposium. Financial support for the symposium was provided by the New York State Council for the Humanities; the Skidmore, Owings and Merrill Foundation; and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The opportunity to publish the proceedings of the symposium is due entirely to the generous support of the Syracuse University Library Associates. Mrs. Gwen G. Robinson, editor of the Library Associates *Courier*, has directed this effort and I wish to express my deepest gratitude for her invaluable assistance. Barbara Opar, Architecture Bibliographer, also deserves special mention for her assistance in preparing materials for inclusion in this issue. I would also like to thank Christopher Gray of the School of Architecture for his work throughout this entire project. He designed the exhibition installation

and the accompanying posters. He also served as the design consultant for this issue of the *Courier*.

Finally, a very special thanks is due to the staff of the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections. Throughout every phase of this project—the exhibition, symposium, and now this publication—their cooperation has been crucial and unfailing.

Dennis P. Doordan
Guest Editor and Associate Curator

William Lescaze and the Machine Age

BY ARTHUR J. PULOS

It seems appropriate as we approach the end of the Machine Age that we should meet to review its birth and ascendancy. Perhaps we should think of ourselves as participating at a wake that remembers a body of thought and work before it is lowered into the vault of history, or, better still, at a celebration and public expression that honor those who half a century ago were able to break the long reign of the Beaux Arts over architecture and the arts of design.

Certainly, our meeting here today provides us with the opportunity to express public appreciation to those at Syracuse University who had the vision to collect and preserve the records of thought and deed of architects and designers like William Lescaze, whose contribution in particular we will be talking about during this symposium. We are also grateful for the scholarship, research, and talent that have made possible this symposium and the fine exhibition that accompanies it. We hope that it will be the first in a series confirming the interest of Syracuse University and the Everson Museum in the evolution and maturation of the environmental arts in this country.

William Lescaze was one of the practical pioneers of twentieth-century architecture and design. While his mentors in Europe were debating theories, he and a handful of his colleagues found fertile ground for their testing and practical application on these shores. But before reviewing Lescaze's early years, we should perhaps first mention those few rebel American architects and designers who helped to set the seed of Modern Architecture and Design that germinated abroad. Louis Sullivan's Transportation Building at the Columbian Exposition in 1893 was the only structure to be honored by the French. Louis Tiffany exhibited examples of his exciting new glass in Samuel Bing's shop, L'Art Nouveau, in Paris when it opened in 1895. Frank Lloyd Wright's innovative house designs were being published and discussed in Germany by 1910, while he was being criticized by America's Beaux Arts establishment. And Gustav Stickley brought the Arts and Crafts movement to its American apogee here in Syracuse.

William Lescaze is uniquely qualified for our particular attention.

He was the product of many "ism's". Born in Cubism, he spent his adolescence in Futurism, began his architectural education in Constructivism, completed it in the first signs of Functionalism, and then dedicated his professional career to the Formalism of what came to be called the International Style in the Machine Age.

Every age has its own character, with a technology and methodology affecting and being affected by social and economic values. The culture of an age is simply the aesthetic amalgamation of all these components. The things that people build and manufacture not only serve their needs and aspirations, but also preserve for all time the essence of their period. Thus, designers in all fields bear the burden of culture, for it is by their sensitivity and their mastery of the tools of their times that knowledge of their era is passed on.

In 1917 the *Literary Digest* referred to America as a Mechanical Athens, a world of machines where products were being "turned out rapidly, cheaply and accurately . . . releasing . . . man . . . for analyzing the machines as they work so that betterment may be achieved and new methods may be evolved by those who are thus enabled to think as they work".[1] In this light it is interesting to recall that a century earlier Thomas Carlyle, reflecting Schiller's fear that the machine had reduced man to a fragment of the whole, lamented the changes brought on by the Age of Machinery. "Men are grown mechanical in head and heart as well as in hand", warned Carlyle. "In our rage for machines we shall ourselves become machines."[2] But now, in the twentieth century, the phrase "the Machine Age" was being used in praise rather than condemnation as a respectable stimulus for modern art, design, and architecture.

A machine is essentially an assemblage of elements that transmits forces, action, and energy from one to another in a predetermined manner to some desired end. The unique character of a machine includes both geometricity in obeisance to technological rationalization, and minimalization in commitment to economy of means. Design for industrial production must consider every eventuality in the process of production. Machine-made products must be designed especially for mass production rather than one-by-one hand processes. Parts must be interchangeable from product to product and all operating systems

1. "America—A Mechanical Athens", *Literary Digest*, 1 September 1917, 24.
2. Thomas Carlyle, "Signs of the Times", *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (Boston: Dana Estes, 1869), 469.

must be pre-tested to meet established standards of performance and endurance. Time, space, facilities, and capital must be sufficient to support the volume of work and to sustain the organization until it becomes self-supporting. Distribution methods, marketing structures, and advertising programs must be commensurate with projected production quantities. And, finally, the machine-made object must be conceived on the forefront of technology, in order to be better than the competition. The goal of the machine is to produce a maximum number of useful products from a minimum amount of materials and energy. Thus the terrible legacy of the designer of manufactured products is to carry before him the familiar banner, "Less is More".

There is really nothing new in the observation that machines and machine-made products are capable of arousing respect for their utilitarian value and admiration for their aesthetic impact. In fact, industries in the United States and other countries were manufacturing products that appealed to the public years before they were "discovered" early in this century as a source of inspiration by artists and architects and elevated to the status of a machine art. Banham refers to a "'machine aesthetic' that saw machinery as the agent of collective discipline and an order that drew nearer and nearer the canons of classical aesthetics",[3] thus confirming the ancient philosopher who recognized geometry centuries ago as a source for absolute beauty. "Understand me", Socrates is quoted in Plato's *Philebus*, "to mean straight lines and circles, and the plane or solid figures that are formed out of them by turning-lathes and rulers and measurers of angles; for these I affirm to be not only relatively beautiful, like other things, but they are eternally and absolutely beautiful."[4]

The mechanical form of the machine and its parts is dependent upon the instruments of the designer. His straight edge and compass behave in a geometric manner; that is, they are capable of making straight lines and circles that are the natural coefficients of the linear and circular motions of the simpler machines of production. Thus, there is an inescapable geometric visual and sensual symbiosis among the instruments of design, the machines of industry, and the form of the products that result. "From the very beginning," Frank Lloyd Wright wrote, "my T-square and triangle were easy media of expression for

3. Reyner Banham, *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1960), 153.
4. Walter Dorwin Teague, *Design This Day* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1940), vii.

my geometric sense of things." As every architect knows, Wright preferred "clean-cut, straight-line forms that the machine can render far better than would be possible by hand". The same innocent empathy may very well have been behind the modern styles that were to come. Wright was, even so, aware that geometric solutions were not necessarily sympathetic to the human figure. "I have been black and blue in some spot, somewhere, almost all my life from too intimate contact with my own furniture."[5]

Theo van Doesburg, one of the principal theorists of the De Stijl movement, pointed out in 1921 that if culture in its widest sense means independence of nature, it should not be surprising that the machine has created its own aesthetic, and this he referred to as the "Mechanical Aesthetic". In fact, most of the new waves of expression of the time, Futurism, Elementalism, Constructivism, and the like had their origins in artists' and architects' responses to the form and action of the machine.

Less than a century ago, the plastic arts drew their inspiration directly from nature. Designers and architects transformed its forms and details into decorative elements that concealed the structure underneath, while painters and sculptors were trying to capture it in all its aspects: the mysterious and grand, as well as the bucolic. In the Machine Age artists are not so stimulated by the natural world as by what has been man-made. They respond to the affluence of technology as well as its effluence. They emulate its mechanization as well as its microscopic, macroscopic, and electronic images. They are entranced by the glittering maze of our lives and as awed by the fortresses and palaces of industry and commerce as they are alarmed by the rubble of our ghettos. With our blessing, they prefer to erect monuments to technology instead of to social and cultural heroes and events—and in doing so, they often imitate the practices of the designer, who himself is utilizing mechanical and construction drawings and even placing orders to the factory over the telephone. In these days artists tend to seek totems in the man-made world and to see humans as depersonalized and mechanized, or even transformed into polyester, super-real beings leading lives, it is said, of quiet desperation.

In Europe the impact of the Machine Age on the practice of architecture and design was largely restrained by social unrest and the weight

5. Frank Lloyd Wright, *An Autobiography* (New York: Horizon, 1977), 145.

of history. The best minds of Europe were, nevertheless, developing theories and seeking to establish their credibility by publishing manifestos and organizing schools to indoctrinate others before putting their theories into practice. On the other hand, Americans, then as now, preferred to put empirical action before dogma, or as one observer wrote, to "form an organized philosophy from the results [of their action]",[6] as if in confirmation of Aristotle's dictum that art runs ahead of its theory. However, this impetuousness is entirely in harmony with the American's unique ability to react freely to the opportunity of the moment and to be sustained by an instinctive faith in technology and its promise for the future.

The opportunities for practice in an open and burgeoning economy on this side of the Atlantic, therefore, attracted the attention of young designers who were impatient with the status quo and discouraged by the economic conditions in Europe. Thus, in the twenties a number of artists, decorators, designers, and architects—including Bernhard, Frankl, Hoffmann, Kiesler, Jensen, Loewy, Muller-Munk, von Nessen, Neutra, Schoen, Vassos, and William Lescaze among others—made their way to the United States. It is fair to say that they found a warmer reception for their innovative concepts and theories here than they might have at home.

William Lescaze began his professional studies in art and then for some reason, perhaps motivated by the war's destruction in Europe, decided to become an architect. Accordingly, he entered the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale in Zürich in 1915 and graduated in 1919 with the degree of Master of Architecture. For a while he worked with a French organization for the repair of war damage and followed that with a few months in Paris in the office of Henri Sauvage, who was dedicated to collective housing and to the manufacture of architectural components. However, disappointed first by the fact that the general direction of post-war architecture seemed to be to put Europe back into its original shape and second by the lack of opportunity to try his hand at the new architecture, Lescaze decided to emigrate to the United States in 1920. He carried with him a letter of reference from his former professor in Zürich, Karl Moser, in which prospective employers were advised "to utilize his [Lescaze's] training to solve the

6. Grace Alexander Young, "Designers That Work in America", *PM Magazine*, August-September 1938, 26.

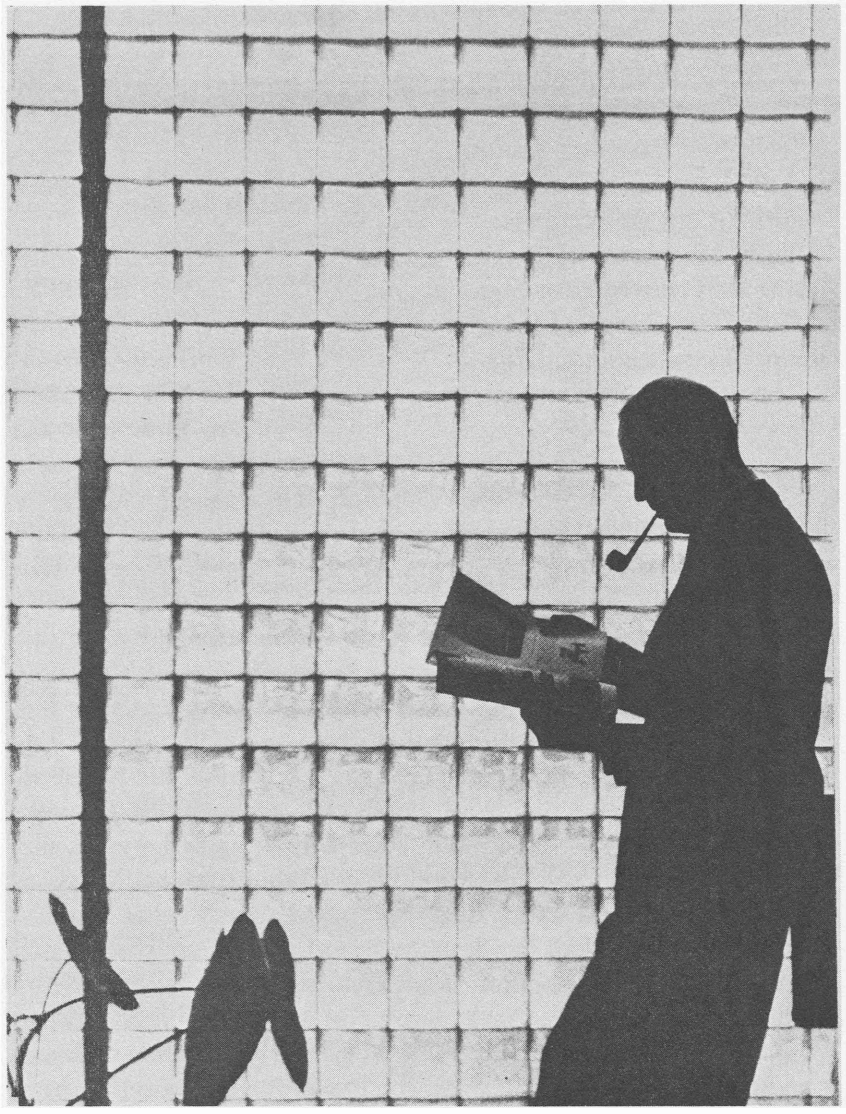
problems of practical workers' housing".[7] For the remainder of his career, Lescaze maintained an interest in the area of public, low-cost housing and both designed and served as a consulting architect on major public housing projects in the New York City area.

The Beaux Arts influence persisted in the United States in one form or another through the early years of the twentieth century until it was laid to rest, at least for a while, in the National Gallery in Washington. Before its demise, however, the new twentieth-century architecture was already underway, as evidenced in the work of several American architects who were urging before 1900 that architecture should be original, not imitative; that it should be suited to the New World environment and technology; and that it should fit the needs of those who were to occupy the buildings. Although their ideas were largely neglected and even ridiculed in this country, they were taken up abroad and added to the distillate that was emerging as the modern movement in architecture. One dimension of the movement was Functionalist—based upon an understanding of the practical problems of technology and economics and upon the development of a structure to meet them. The second was Formalist—stemming from the conviction that function was not enough and that true architecture begins where function leaves off, with forms that are expressive of the purpose of a building and symbolic of the times of which it is a part. There is also a third dimension, the Moralistic, and it is this one that in the end tends to override the other two. A building, according to this point of view, should be conceived in the best interest of man and society. The moralistic attitude seeks to humanize technology and acknowledges that beauty rests, as Emerson once pointed out, on the foundation of the necessary.

As early as 1921 Lewis Mumford sensed that a modern style was reaching maturity, a stage at which the machine could be reconciled with the decent requirements of society. He suggested that architecture had a dual responsibility: namely, to respect the logic of the machine as well as the vagaries of human psychology.

William Lescaze later made his own peace with the three dimensions of the modern movement. "Architecture is a social art and every architectural movement has a social origin", he wrote; and because he

7. Ann Lorraine Lanmon, "The Role of William Lescaze in the Introduction of the International Style to the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, 1979), 20.



William Lescaze in the living room of the Lescaze Townhouse.
This photograph was used as the poster image for the Lescaze exhibition.
(Photo: William Lescaze Papers, George Arents Research Library
for Special Collections, Syracuse University).

believed functional order to be the essence of architecture, he further proposed that architecture "must grow out of our life, answer its needs, and fulfill its material and technical wealth. So we try to erect forms expressive of our life and appropriate to our needs, and insofar as we succeed they must be beautiful."[8] The "real architect . . . chooses from the many possible forms, all functionally adequate, *that one* which is aesthetically most satisfying."[9]

Many architects, including Le Corbusier in the twenties, were suggesting that the forms and products of the Machine Age should be looked to for inspiration. Gropius also insisted that architecture should seek an accommodation with the Machine Age. Outlining the curriculum of the Bauhaus at Dessau, he wrote in *Idee und Aufbau* in 1923: "We aim to create a clean organic architecture whose inner logic will be clear and radiant. We want an architecture adapted to the world of machines, radios and fast cars." He proposed that the schools' responsibility was "to educate men and women to understand the world in which they live and to invent and create forms symbolizing that world."[10]

Gropius saw Rationalism as one aspect of Functionalism and as a purifying force only. But Formalism, he warned, was nothing more than a fashion in modern art. Nevertheless, a mannered style had already begun to appear at the Bauhaus by which objects were being styled to give an illusion of manufactured products whose geometric form and construction details were their only ornament. In this context, it is interesting to recall that, some fifty years earlier, machine methods were used to manufacture things so that they would appear to have been made by hand. And now, in the twenties, the Bauhaus workshops were using handcraft methods, as were the French decorateurs, to produce objects that seemed to have been made by machines. At the Bauhaus, for example, Laszlo Moholy-Nagy criticized Wilhelm Wagenfeld for having changed cylindrical ceramic milk jugs into drop-shaped forms. "How can you betray the Bauhaus like this?" he scolded. "We have always fought for simple basic shapes, cylinder, cube and cone, and now you are making a soft form which is dead

8. William Lescaze, "The Meaning of Modern Architecture", *North American Review* 244 (1937), no. 4: 117.
9. William Lescaze, "The Classic of Tomorrow", *American Architect* 147 (December 1935): 11.
10. Banham, *Theory and Design*, 279.

against all that we have been after."[11]

Indeed, Gropius himself was more of a Formalist than a Functionalist. He praised the "trilogy of the sphere, cone and cube" as honest sources for form; and eventually, as the Functionalists began to dominate the Bauhaus, he found it prudent to relinquish his position as director of the Bauhaus to Hannes Meyer. A short time later the National Socialists closed the Bauhaus and ran Meyer and his fellow travelers off to Moscow.

William Lescaze did not interpret international architecture to be "a bag of tricks", as he called it, to which everyone would subscribe. Nor did he think of it as a fashion that one adopted until the next one came along. His aim was "to express in clean moving lines with functional order and with harmonious proportion all the qualities of life that have come to mark our times".[12]

It is to his credit that Lescaze did not conceive the form of his expression as anything more than the only way to say what he had to say. Although Lescaze did not consider himself a stylist, the Machine Age character carried across his entire spectrum of design from architecture and interiors to furnishings, accessories, and graphics. His commitment to modern materials and the Machine Age in general has resulted in a body of work that is consistent in quality and clearly in tune with his times.

Lescaze maintained his contacts with professional friends in Europe and made periodic trips abroad to keep up with the latest developments and theories, which he then shared, cleansed of the polemics of postwar Europe, with his colleagues and clients in the United States. In this sense Lescaze fits John Fiske's description of a "carrier" of culture, that is, one who moves freely across national borders and thus helps to shape a more unified world philosophy of design. Certainly, Lescaze's contribution to twentieth-century architecture helped break down the hold of traditional styles of architecture.

In this changing scene the new architecture was developing a distinctive aesthetic character that included an appreciation for volume rather than mass. Its overall form was essentially horizontal in a balanced asymmetrical order. Roofs were flat and walls were white panels—not unlike the "flats" that are used in stage settings. Windows were horizon-

11. Banham, *Theory and Design*, 232.

12. William Lescaze, "A Modern Housing for a Museum", *Parnassus* 9 (November 1937): 12.

tal ribbons of glass. Indeed, Modern Architecture was conceived as comprised of precise and pure shapes that captured the spirit of the Machine Age. In a way, the new buildings were reminiscent of Frank Lloyd Wright's earlier buildings, now scraped clean of ornament or any evidence of natural materials. However, unlike Wright's buildings that were set organically into a site so that they became part of the earth itself, the new buildings were perched defiantly on their sites. In this they resembled machines standing free of nature, defying man to come into the world of tomorrow.

As the characteristic forms of the new architecture began to crystallize, the name International Style gained currency as appropriate to its disassociation from tradition and national allegiance. The first use of the name is taken by some to have been made by Walter Gropius in 1925 as the title of his book *Internationale Architektur*. In 1932 the term International Style was given its strongest support when Alfred Barr used it in his preface to the catalogue of the International Exhibition of Modern Architecture at the Museum of Modern Art. Incidentally, examples of the work of William Lescaze and his partner, George Howe, were included in the exhibition. It is also interesting to point out that with this exhibition the Style had been cleared of any European socialist implications and thus made palatable to Americans as Formalist rather than Functionalist architecture.

The monuments of the International Style are generally conceded to be the Barcelona Pavilion of 1929 by Mies van der Rohe and the Ville d'Avray of 1928-1930 by Le Corbusier. The first was an extraordinarily handsome exhibit, set forth in the form of a house built of exotic materials and equipped with custom-built furniture. The second was an elegant country retreat. In effect, both were stage settings. The first is now destroyed and the second abandoned, so far as I know.

It may be presumptuous to suggest that two of the buildings associated with William Lescaze should also be considered as monuments of the International Style—at least in the United States. The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society building (built between 1929 and 1932 by the partners Howe and Lescaze) is certainly one, in my opinion. Virtually all of the furnishings and accessories were especially designed and manufactured on a custom basis. Later, duplicates of some of the pieces were offered for sale to the public. The building's special appeal is the introduction of building forms that seem like jazz improvisations laid over the calmer melody of the International Style. The second monu-

ment that I have in mind is William Lescaze's own house, designed and built in 1934—the first International Style private home in New York City. It was selected as a historic monument in 1976 by the Landmark Preservation Society. Both buildings support Lescaze's conviction that the modern of today will be the classic of tomorrow.

The International Style, despite its acceptance as the central style of the architectural Machine Age, is derived from a simpler earlier period when machines were more innocent extensions of hand processes. The instruments of the designers were available to every school boy. Every design, whether for machine, product, building, or city, was conceived in two-dimensional elevations and plans formulated by two-dimensional thinking, a fact which is still evident in most so-called avant-garde products and even parodied by Memphis and the misnamed Hi Tech. Thus the International Style is not a guide to the future of design and architecture because it does not allow for the organic and electronic expansion that is underway.

Moreover, as Reyner Banham has suggested, architecture and technology may not be compatible disciplines. R. Buckminster Fuller rejected the International Style out of hand as being conceived without knowledge of scientific principles and concerned only with superficialities that were merely the side effects of technical obsolescence. Modern Architecture, he believed, had fallen behind in the twenties because it had halted its forward progress in order to refine a vocabulary of style that was derived from rather naive simulations of machine forms. His own philosophy of design was distinctly Futurist—dedicated to steady technological progress. Futurism forges relentlessly ahead while style moves in erratic stages, stopping on occasion to consolidate its expression and savor its distinctive character, even taking an aesthetic backward step on occasion in order to gain enough momentum to leap forward to the next stylistic plateau. Such pauses in the evolution of style are not without their value to those industries that support the architectural profession because they permit the stabilization of inventories and catalogues. The danger, of course, is that this practice results in vested interests that discourage change when opportunity dares to knock. Moreover, there is the ever-present risk that the style may collapse into a pile of lifeless clichés to be picked over and used by anyone of modest or no talent at all. Lewis Mumford observed that a style must be living (and this is almost a contradiction in terms) in order to be able to produce new forms; otherwise it is, as he wrote, "as in-

capable of yielding fresh designs as a mummy is of begetting a family".[13]

The catalytic agents for change, today as in the past, are the tastemakers (to borrow Russell Lynes' term), who serve to break down resistance to change. They operate by disparaging an existing style in order to clear the way for a new one that they will then extoll as being more honest and thus more appropriate for those who wish to keep up with the times. The tastemakers who established the International Style had first to breach the walls of the Beaux Arts with the same tenacity of purpose as drives today's champions of the Post-Modernist movement in their chopping away at the fortifications of the International Style.

The most exciting event in the twenties was the Paris Exposition of Modern Decorative Arts and Industries that introduced in 1925 what is now known to the world as Art Deco. (Incidentally, the United States turned down an invitation to participate because Herbert Hoover, as Secretary of Commerce, had concluded after discussions with manufacturers that this country had nothing original to show.) In 1927, after many designers and architects (including Lescaze) had visited the exposition and caught the spirit of the modern movement, it surfaced in New York City, making that the seminal year in modern American design. At the same time, the American Association of Museums began circulating a collection of examples from the Paris show, and Macy's in New York staged an experimental exposition to show the advances that American manufacturers had made in introducing modern design into everyday products. This, by the way, was followed in 1928 by a major exhibition at Macy's, "The International Exposition of Art and Industry", to which Lescaze contributed a penthouse concept with furnishings of his own design.

Also in 1927, the little, but in no way minor, "Machine Age Exposition" was staged in New York City under the auspices of the *Little Review* magazine. It was organized by Jane Heap to demonstrate that utility does not preclude the presence of beauty. On the contrary, it showed that a machine cannot be entirely efficient without the element of beauty. Its goal was to bring the engineer and the artist together in a way that would forecast the future. There followed at the Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1932 a second exhibition, "Design for

13. Lewis Mumford, "Machinery and the Modern Style", *The New Republic*, 3 August 1921, 264.

the Machine", conceived to illustrate that machine-made products can provide the utensils and furnishings of everyday life. Lescaze participated with a design for a drawing room equipped with machine-made furnishings. In 1934 the Museum of Modern Art installed an exhibition entitled "Machine Art", in which Lescaze was again represented with desk accessories and lamps that were designed originally for the PSFS building and were now apparently on the open market. The objective of the show was to demonstrate how human needs can be met by mechanical means and found its expression in the geometry of solid shapes. It is fair to say that virtually no exhibitions of modern buildings and accessories were held between 1927 and 1935 in which the work of Lescaze was not included.

As Robert A. M. Stern and others have pointed out, developments in 1927 in communication by radio and national periodicals were drawing the public together and helping to stimulate demand for mass-produced appliances that were rapidly following electricity into every home. Ernest Elmo Calkins, head of a successful advertising agency, published an article "Design, the New Business Tool", which focused the attention of business and industry on the importance and value of design. The Cheneys recognized that one group rooted in modernist architecture was obviously broadening the acceptance of industrial design as it related to other contemporary design activities. This they were doing not only by their creative work in accessories and furnishings but also with buildings. "There is a spreading machine-age consciousness."[14]

It was inevitable that the Depression would steer more than a few architects into industrial design, not only the younger ones but others too, who, like Lescaze, already had a strong inclination toward a broader approach to design. Architects, with building commissions few and far between, found new challenges in the design of furniture and furnishings, first on a custom basis for their architectural clients and later in the open marketplace for mass-produced products. Some, like Raymond Sandin, were pleased to find an alternative career. Others, like Dave Chapman, viewed product design as an attractive and lucrative, but nevertheless a substitute, career. Eliot Noyes regretted the fact that, despite his contributions to architecture, he was better known as an industrial designer than as an architect. George Nelson

14. Sheldon Cheney and Martha Cheney, *Art and the Machine* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936), 8.

moved sideways to become the wisest observer of the design scene in this country as well as a highly regarded designer.

William Lescaze was critical of industrial designers who, he believed, were primarily concerned with superficial aspects of form. He was of the opinion that architects, as creative designers, had traditionally been responsible for the development of furniture and furnishings for manufacture that would be appropriate for their buildings. He was also aware that the architect had "started the improvement of the design situation even though the objects that he designed were not at that time manufactured in large quantities and were, therefore, expensive."[15] Such objects were essentially handmade from readily available materials on custom order without the benefit of the specialized tooling that is mandated for products to be mass-produced. They were, in effect, conceived as miniature buildings because they followed the same technique of design and specifications as those used for architecture. In all fairness it should be pointed out that many designers of machine-made products followed similar methods, because the products in the early Machine Age were often made from available finished materials such as sheet metal, tubing, and rods. Even when they were to be made in molds, the same influence was present because the models, whether of wood or plaster, were made by geometrically-based machine processes.

Robert M. Coates in his profile on William Lescaze in *The New Yorker* observed that: "Formerly, he used to throw such little inventions as this in gratis, but lately he has grown less prodigal, and has turned his facility to more practical account in the field of industrial design."[16]

As time passed, Lescaze became convinced that the architect should try to "market his designs for the accessories for his own financial gain". And, in fact, he as well as others, did cross the line to take out patents for special products that were designed originally for architectural application. The desk accessories that Lescaze designed for the PSFS building were in all likelihood priced and sold separately under a royalty agreement with their manufacturer. On a point of ethics, however, it should be noted that when this was done (as, for example, in the

15. William Lescaze, "On Being an Architect", typescript for autobiography, William Lescaze Papers, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University: 171.

16. Robert M. Coates, "Profile—William Lescaze", *The New Yorker*, 12 December 1936, 32.

case of porcelain lighting fixtures that were designed by Lescaze for low-cost housing projects and manufactured by the former Alabax Division of the Pass and Seymour Company of Syracuse), patents were assigned to the client with the proviso that no royalty was to be paid for any sales that were part of the Williamsburg project in Brooklyn, for which the original design was developed. However, this arrangement did not preclude the payment of royalty when the fixture was subsequently offered on the open market and selected for installation in other similar projects, such as the Parkchester group in the Bronx or the Red Hook project in Brooklyn.

Lescaze also took on assignments outside the realm of architecture for manufactures such as a billiard table for the Brunswick-Balke-Collender Company, as well as a concept for a weighing machine and ideas for small post-war radios for the Emerson Company. However, such assignments spread over a long, illustrious career in architecture were really too few to justify the title of industrial designer. Lescaze was really in his element as a designer of special products for his architectural clients, such as (with George Howe) the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society and later (on his own) the Columbia Broadcasting System. The assignment with Columbia Broadcasting was a dream assignment, including as it did a corporate mark, signage, adaptation of existing theatres to radio studios, new building, and equipment such as microphones and even a sound truck built over a GMC one-and-a-half-ton truck chassis and fitted with a Plexiglas roof.

Over the years design and architecture have enjoyed a warm but wary relationship. Architecture has largely ignored what it chooses to think of as its upstart friend, yet has turned to it either in times of economic stress or in search for that instant fame that comes from having one's name attached to a unique chair that is elevated to sculpture—to be admired but never disgraced by use. Design, on the other hand, continues to hunger for the status of architecture and looks to catch the flame of the latest Formalist fashion from its senior associate.

During the Design Decade, as *Architectural Forum* dubbed the thirties, American designers began to reach beyond the shorter vision of manufacturers in order to quicken the pace by which the science and technology of the machine could be put to human service. The public was flattered by the attention being paid to it and began to look upon manufactured products as indispensible to living in the modern world.

For all of the criticism that has been laid on them, manufactured products come closer to Futurism than buildings. Products must constantly be either revised in order to keep up with advancing technology or forced, unhappily, to fall back on superficial changes in order to imply progress that does not exist. For they serve a free and volatile public in a competitive atmosphere in which the investment for design and production must be made and the product must be offered and accepted before there is any return to the manufacturer. And, in a strange circle, it is the income from that service that provides the resources that build the building.

In the beginning of this paper I noted that William Lescaze was the product of many "ism's". He would not have liked hearing me compartmentalize his career so glibly. Moreover, I am certain that he would have taken issue with my simplistic description of the three dimensions of Modern Architecture as being Formalist, Functionalist, and Moralist. For this facile categorizing, I apologize to his memory.

Nevertheless, Lescaze had a sense of history and of his relation to the ideological issues and aesthetic conflicts that were prevalent in the Machine Age. While he might have rejected the tags they attracted, his work gave substance to the principles they embodied.

Someone once wrote that the only vanity that may be pardoned persons of lofty spirit is the desire to leave behind a part of themselves. William Lescaze was such a spirit. "I still hope", he once wrote in a note to himself, "that sweet history will show . . . that I did influence the current of modern architecture."[17]

17. William Lescaze [Autobiographical Notes], William Lescaze Papers, Series II, box 1, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University.

William Lescaze and Hart Crane: A Bridge Between Architecture and Poetry

BY LINDSAY STAMM SHAPIRO

The following is a curious note about the influence that William Lescaze had on Hart Crane after Lescaze's emigration to the United States. In 1920 Lescaze worked in Paris for Henri Sauvage, an architect noted for his set-back apartment blocks and his involvement with workers' housing. Lescaze grew impatient with the lack of architectural projects after the war and, at the same time, longed to start his own practice. His former teacher, Karl Moser, asked, "Where are you ever going to find the chance of doing monumental work? Egypt? It's too late. Maybe America."[1] At that point, Lescaze determined to emigrate to America, as did so many other European figures during this period. Thus, in any assessment of Lescaze's work, it is necessary to emphasize his situation as a European émigré. Lescaze was attracted by a myth of America, a myth which was, in any case, partly of European invention. He arrived in New York with a letter of recommendation from Moser *auf deutsch*, only to discover that Moser's reputation had yet to reach the New World. Unable to find work in the metropolis of his dreams, Lescaze settled in Cleveland, Ohio, where he exhibited paintings and worked, ironically enough, in a bastion of architectural conservatism, the office of Hubbel and Benes.

Also in Cleveland during the 1920s were the composers Ernest Bloch and Roger Sessions, and the painter Charles Burchfield; but it was with Hart Crane that the architect forged a lasting relationship. Crane's and Lescaze's rapport undoubtedly stands as one of the most interesting liaisons between architecture and poetry in America. It has not been sufficiently noted that Hart Crane received inspiration from the cosmopolitan background of Lescaze, who provided the prodigious American poet with literary sources of symbolism. One may surmise that Lescaze became a symbolic "bridge" for Crane, the future poet of *The Bridge*, as well as a link to the technological dream of modernism. The influence of Rimbaud, Baudelaire, and Laforgue, whose work Lescaze first introduced to Crane, is evident in Crane's first book, *White*

1. This quotation was discovered in the William Lescaze Papers, Series II, box 1, George Arents Research Library, Syracuse University.

Buildings (1926), with its rather purist title. Crane himself wrote, "Lescaze has proved an inspiration to me. Knowing intimately the work of Marcel Proust, Salmon, Gide, and a host of other French moderns, he is able to see so much better than anyone else around here, the aims I have in my own work. . . . I never found a more stimulating individual in N.Y."[2] Lescaze's portrait of Hart Crane, published in the Parisian journal *Gargoyle* in 1923, accentuated the utopian element in Crane. Crane praised the portrait for its almost melodramatic, visionary quality, a quality brought out by the emphatic right eye that suggested for him the notion of the *voyant* (fig. 1).[3]

Crane needed at that point to discover the means to counteract the pessimism of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", which he considered to be a collage of the accumulated debris of Europe and Asia. Also, Crane, like William Carlos Williams, wanted to create a vernacular affirmation of the machine age without resorting to the use of naturalistic mimesis. Crane's poetry aspires to a gigantic scale, a new maximalism, that is comparable to Lescaze's quest for the monumental in architecture. There is no doubt that Crane was involved in something like a "skyscraper poetry"; similarly, Lescaze alluded to skyscrapers even in his furniture designs. In Crane's work there is an insistence on inserting canonic American diction: "Stick your patent name on a signboard/brother—all over—going west—young man. . ."[4] Yet Crane wanted America affirmed not only in diction, since he also used Christopher Columbus, Pocahontas, and Rip Van Winkle as American heroes and myths. This was his response to the overly Europeanized modernists and expatriates like Eliot and Pound, who disdained the American mainland. Lescaze, a European, resembles Crane in that he attempted to adapt European modernism to an American context. Although he started from the opposite direction geographically, Lescaze, like Crane, sought to move beyond the facile architectural symbolism of the Moderne Style to an aesthetic truly appropriate for the new epoch. Both men maintained a balance between the American and the European elements of their respective art forms.

2. Letter to Gorham Munson, October 6, 1921, in *The Letters of Hart Crane: 1916-1932*, ed. by Brom Weber (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 66-67.

3. For more on this portrait and Crane's response see: Ann Lorraine Lanmon, "The Role of William Lescaze in the Introduction of the International Style to the United States" (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, 1979), 38-43.

4. Hart Crane, "The River", *The Bridge* (New York: Liveright, 1970), 16.

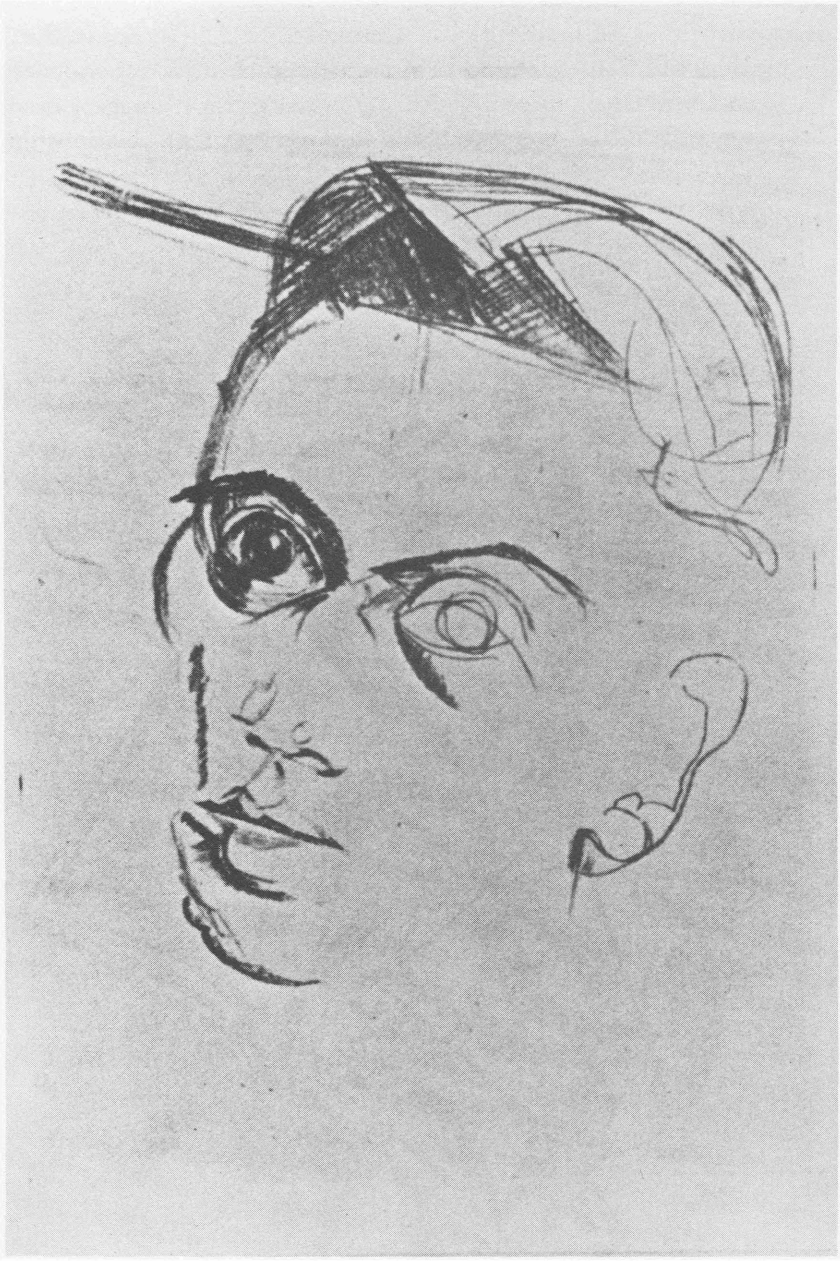


Fig. 1. Hart Crane, portrait by William Lescaze (1923).
Published with the permission of the Hart Crane Collection,
Columbia University Library.

And just as Crane never gave up his poetic inheritance of metrics and tensions, neither did Lescaze give up the traditions of architecture. Surely one does not want to build a complete structure of correspondences between Crane and Lescaze, based on their skyscraper imagery of affirmation and collage, but one should not overlook their relationship.

The "Modern" Skyscraper, 1931

BY CAROL WILLIS

"The Philadelphia Saving Fund Society (PSFS) seems handsomer today than when it was completed", wrote William Jordy and Henry Wright in the 1960s, when, finding the building neglected by historians, they sought to resurrect its reputation.[1] The same assessment of the quality of the building could be repeated today, fifty-two years after the building's opening in 1932. Indeed, the bank headquarters and commercial office tower by the partnership of George Howe and William Lescaze looks more "contemporary" at present than at any time since its construction. PSFS combines a complexity of massing with a rich variety of materials and color which is absent in most later monuments of corporate modernism, but which has become a feature of many recent skyscraper designs.[2]

PSFS endures in the history books, however, not so much for its evident quality as for its priority as the first American skyscraper designed in the International Style. Indeed, for over a decade, due to the interruption of commercial construction during the Depression and World War II, PSFS remained virtually the only skyscraper in the new aesthetic. During that time, however, the International Style came to be synonymous with Modern Architecture. It can be argued, then, that although PSFS is a fine building, its particular fame is contingent on the subsequent development of Modern Architecture and the writing of its canonical history. Within the orthodox interpretation, PSFS becomes a critical link in the chain—"the most important tall building between those of Sullivan in the 1890s and the Seagram Building"—as Jordy asserted in the 1960s, and as many texts have since repeated.[3]

The fascinating story of the commission for PSFS and the many stages of development of the building's design have been admirably and exhaustively detailed in the writings of Robert A. M. Stern and William

1. William H. Jordy and Henry Wright, "PSFS", *Architectural Forum* 120 (May 1964): 125.

2. In my talk, this point was illustrated by 500 Park Avenue by James Stewart Polshek and Partners, which bears a striking similarity to PSFS; many other recent skyscrapers could be cited.

3. Jordy and Wright, "PSFS", 143.

H. Jordy.[4] They have documented the collaboration of Howe and Lescaze, distinguishing as much as possible their respective roles, and they have analyzed the building in terms of its program, patronage, and precedents.

If, however, almost all of the footnotes have already been written about the singular achievement of PSFS, much still remains to be said about the skyscraper as a building type—indeed, the building type—of the 1920s and 1930s. In this paper, therefore, I would like to re-examine PSFS in the context of other tall buildings of the period in order to note what is either typical or extraordinary about it. The other buildings I will discuss are today described by many as Art Deco, but at the time were called "modern", without any suggestion of polemics. Therefore, this paper is also about what "modern" meant in the years before it acquired the specific stylistic identity of the International Style.

In February 1932, the Museum of Modern Art mounted the now-famous exhibition which presented an extremely discriminating survey of the previous decade of European, and some American, modernism. Organized by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, the show with its related publications was a brilliantly constructed polemic, which presented the new architecture as a cohesive movement with common principles.[5] Much of the work shown was already familiar to many American architects, but the proceedings of the symposium held in connection with the show record that even an up-to-date designer such as Raymond Hood was startled by the coherence of the style as it was

4. Both William H. Jordy and Robert A. M. Stern have published extensive studies of PSFS. The earliest pieces appeared in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 21 (May 1962); this issue, devoted entirely to PSFS, included Jordy's "PSFS: Its Development and Its Significance in Modern Architecture", and Robert A. M. Stern's "PSFS: Beaux-Arts Theory and Rational Expressionism". Jordy subsequently published a summary of his research in the *Architectural Forum*, cited above, and an expanded account in his book, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1972), 87-164. Robert Stern has discussed PSFS with particular attention to distinguishing Howe's contribution in his book, *George Howe: Toward a Modern American Architecture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), especially 108-32.

5. The exhibition and the catalog were titled *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1932); the catalog included an introduction by Alfred H. Barr, Jr., essays and entries by Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson, and a piece on housing by Lewis Mumford. Today, the best-known document of the exhibition, though, is the contemporary book by Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1932), which has been reprinted many times.

presented.[6] In other words, the MoMA show, in a real way, can be said to have introduced the idea of a single, unified, modern style to most American architects. In the book that accompanied the exhibition, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, Hitchcock and Johnson advanced three basic criteria of the modern aesthetic: architecture as volume, not mass; regularity rather than symmetry; and avoidance of applied ornament. In addition, they stressed the importance of modern materials and the honest expression of structure.

Some American architects were included in the exhibition, apparently at the insistence of the Museum's board.[7] Though still unfinished, PSFS was shown, along with eight other projects of the firm Howe and Lescaze. Their skyscraper was an exemplary essay in the new aesthetic (figs. 1 and 2). The complex massing reflected the different functions of the street-level shops, banking room, executive offices, and rental space, and the vertical spine of the service core was clearly distinguished from the horizontal office floors; the tower was placed asymmetrically over the tall, round-cornered base to afford the best natural light. The steel cage construction was expressed on the east and west facades by exposing the end piers, thereby accenting the vertical structural members; this break with standard methods of construction necessitated special bracing and additional expense, features which will be mentioned again below. On the Market Street side, the tower was cantilevered and the curtain wall emphasized the horizontal through the alternating bands of strip windows and continuous spandrels. Exterior ornament was limited to graphics and to their intrinsic colors and textures of the materials. All the interior spaces, fittings, and furnishings were custom-designed; in my opinion, it is these superb interiors which deserve the highest praise as an achievement of the International Style.

It should be kept in mind that when Howe and Lescaze were designing PSFS, the term "International Style" as yet had no stylistic definition. In his introduction to the catalog of the MoMA exhibition, Alfred Barr made a distinction between modern and "modernistic", and he derided this latter approach (what today we call Art Deco) as simply "decorating surfaces".[8] Howe and Lescaze were often called "radical

6. Some of Hood's reactions to the exhibition are recorded in a speech he gave at a symposium held in connection with the show; see "Symposium: The International Architecture Exhibition", *Shelter* 2 (April 1932): 6-8.

7. Stern, *George Howe*, 154, note 37.

8. Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Modern Architecture: International Exhibition*, 13.

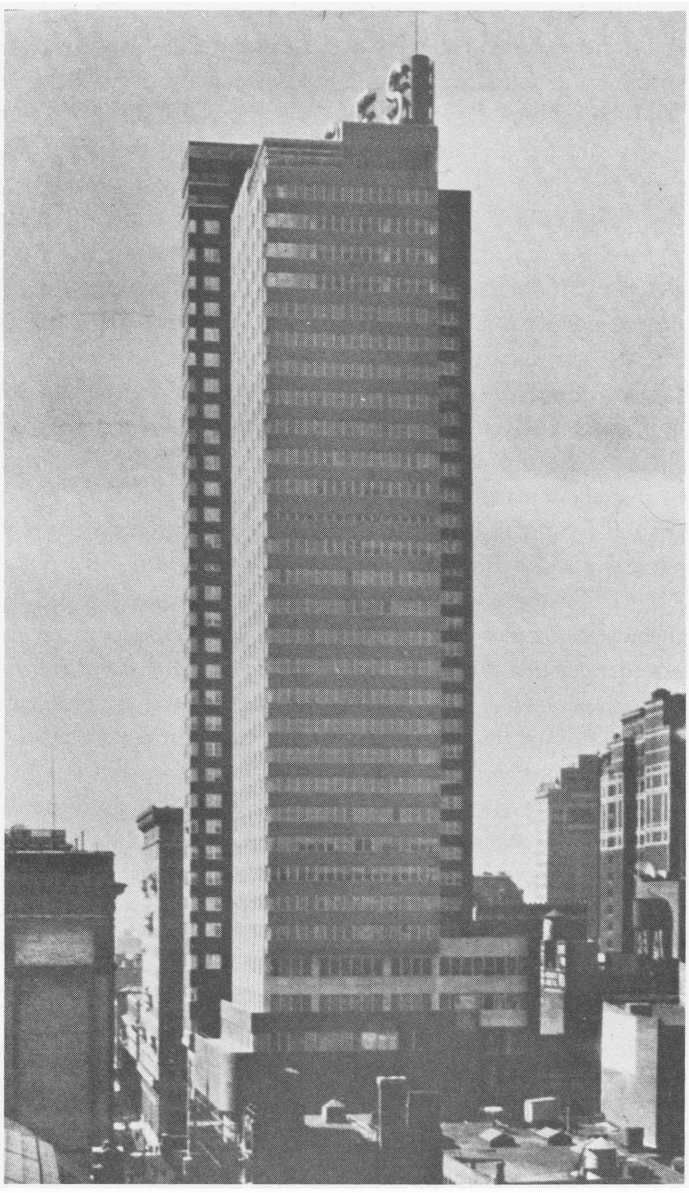


Fig. 1. Howe and Lescaze, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, 1929-32 (PSFS).

Fig. 2. Howe and Lescaze, Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, 1929-32, north and east elevation (R. T. Donner).

modernists", and PSFS was branded "ultra-modern". Countering this description, the architects were said to have won the approval of the conservative bankers of the PSFS board by arguing that their design was not "ultra-modern, but ultra-practical".[9]

We can gain a sense of the multiple meanings of "modern" before 1932 by looking at the work of the most prominent designers of the period. The architects who were reputed to be the country's leading modernists were a trio of New Yorkers: Raymond Hood, Ely Jacques Kahn, and Ralph Walker. Allene Talmey wrote of them in 1931: "They are three little men who build tall buildings, and who probably rake into their offices more business than any other architects in the city. . . . The three live in a ferment. They change their architectural notions once a week. . . . They are constantly publicized, interviewed, quoted. They dash to Boston. They race to Chicago. They have a glorious time."[10]

This description may suggest one reason why many critics have been skeptical about the work of these men: they regard it as superficial and unprincipled—which is unfair. They also find it commercial, which it is. But to disdain commercialism in skyscrapers is to misunderstand the building type completely. Certainly, the exuberance of the "three little Napoleons", as they were sometimes called, contrasted sharply with the solemn self-examination of George Howe during his conversion to modernism or the self-image of Lescaze as avant-garde artist/architect. But although Hood, Kahn, and Walker had no polemical view of modernism as a single style, they were all very serious indeed about creating an architecture that they believed was expressive of contemporary American society.

Ely Jacques Kahn was the most prolific of the three. In the 1920s he designed dozens of speculative office and loft buildings in what became widely known as the "setback style". An example is 80 John Street, an insurance company building in lower Manhattan completed in 1927 (fig. 3). Its characteristic stepped-back form, like a series of stacked boxes of diminishing size, was a direct product of the New York City zoning law of 1916, which established a formula for the maximum bulk or "envelope" of a building.[11] Characteristically, though,

9. Jordy, *American Buildings*, 90.

10. Allene Talmey, "Man Against the Sky", *The New Yorker*, 11 April 1931, 24.

11. In most histories, the New York zoning law of 1916, the nation's first such ordinance, is generally cited as an influence on the form of New York skyscrapers;

Kahn reduced the number of permissible setbacks and treated the building as a simple, sculptural mass. He also invented a rich variety of ornament, with which he accented the edges of the setbacks. Today, we tend to think of Kahn's modernism as residing in these abstract, Art Deco motifs, yet his contemporaries considered his subordination of ornament to the powerful expression of mass to be the major feature of his modernism.

Like Kahn, Ralph Walker conceptualized his buildings as solid masses. His headquarters for Irving Trust at One Wall Street (fig. 4), a bank headquarters and office building completed in 1931, offered a program similar to PSFS, but a very different solution. A tower rises above a tall base which recedes in a series of shallow setbacks. The building is uniformly sheathed in limestone, which makes it seem a single form. The stone cladding curves in around the windows like a curtain draped on the steel skeleton; surface becomes ornament as the changes in plane enrich the wall with the play of shadow. Walker noted that "the quality of the walls developed from the then current thought that the exterior of a modern building was in the nature of a curtain wall covering the structure of the building."[12] Like most of his colleagues, he considered this sort of facade treatment an honest expression of structure. Their logic was, in effect, that since any fool knew that a fifty-two-story skyscraper was built of steel, there could be no pretense that the stone facing was a bearing wall. For Walker, the emphasis on simple form and integral ornament constituted his rather moderate modernism.

The most celebrated of the New York modernists was Raymond Hood. Unlike Walker and Kahn, Hood avoided the setback and, whenever possible, gave his buildings the form of a tower—or at least the illusion of one.[13] In the Daily News Building of 1930-31 (fig. 5), the massing was radically simplified. The shaft of the tower, set back from the sidewalk, rose without stepping back and its verticality was emphasized by the pattern of stripes, white brick piers alternating with dark windows and spandrels. One contemporary critic observed: "The

however, the extent of its influence in changing the *aesthetics* of skyscraper design has not been sufficiently appreciated by scholars.

12. Ralph Walker, *Ralph Walker, Architect* (New York: Henahan House, 1957), 35.

13. I developed this reading of Hood's preference for towers in the exhibition "Raymond Hood: City of Towers", which was shown at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, January 7 - March 7, 1984; the point was elaborated in my lectures and will be documented in a forthcoming article.

Fig. 3. Ely Jacques Kahn, 80 John Street, New York, 1927 (F. Mujica, *History of the Skyscraper*, New York and Paris, 1930, Plate CX).

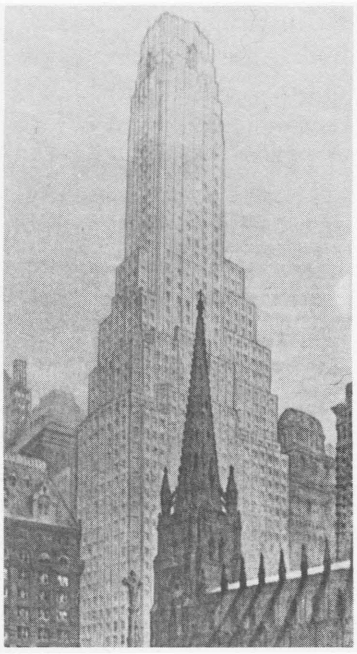


Fig. 4. Ralph Walker, Irving Trust (One Wall Street), New York, 1930-31 (*Ralph Walker, Architect*, New York, 1957).

building has no middle and no top: the stripes simply jump off into space . . . and the setbacks are so few and so generous as to seem, like the top, to have been cut with the scissors."[14]

In an early version of the Daily News, the impression of a sheer tower was to have been even more emphatic. Hood wanted the shaft to soar above a base of only three stories. The switch to the present nine-story base was forced upon Hood by his client, Colonel Patterson, who against the architect's pleas demanded the extra office floors that the zoning ordinance allowed. Patterson also vetoed Hood's suggestion for limestone facing; he suggested more economical brick, thus setting the condition for the most distinctive design feature of the News, its bold vertical stripes.[15] It is interesting to note that for both the Daily News

14. Douglas Haskell, "The Stripes of the News", *The Nation*, 24 December 1930, 713.

15. An insider's account of the design of the Daily News Building is detailed in the monograph by Walter H. Kilham, Jr., who worked in Hood's office during the period; see *Raymond Hood, Architect* (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Co., 1973), especially 15-27.

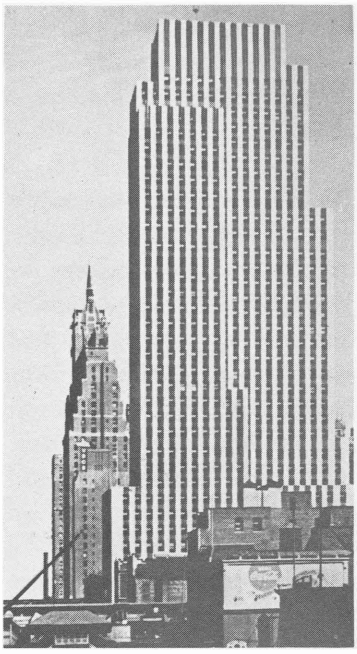


Fig. 5. Raymond Hood,
Daily News Building, New York,
1930-31 (Walter H. Kilham, Jr.).

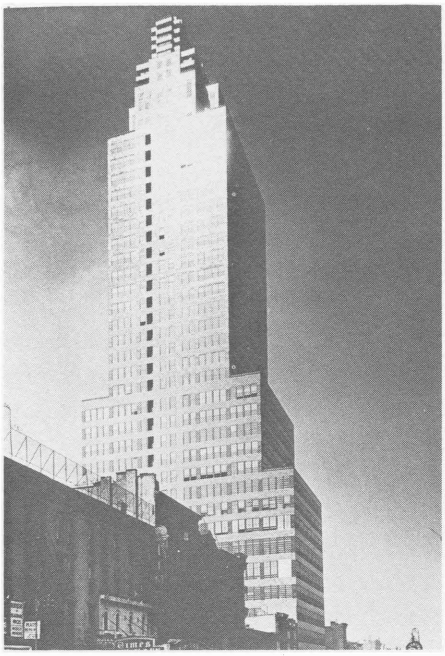


Fig. 6. Raymond Hood,
McGraw-Hill Building
New York, 1930-31 (Gottscho).

and for PSFS, the clients, working closely with the architects, gave suggestions which significantly altered the design of their buildings. At PSFS, it was the insistence of the bank's president, James Willcox, which resulted in the vertical expression of the piers on the east and west facades.[16]

I have focused on the Daily News Building because it clearly illustrates the idea of architecture as sculpted mass, an idea which we have seen in the work of Kahn and Walker and which was an aspect of most progressive design in the later 1920s. Another Hood tower, though, the McGraw-Hill Building of 1930-31 (fig. 6), is the one traditionally compared to PSFS. McGraw-Hill was the only other skyscraper besides PSFS included in the International Style exhibition. Hitchcock and Johnson praised it for its "lightness, simplicity, and lack of applied

16. For a thorough history of the changes demanded by the client, see Jordy, *American Buildings*, 106-110, and Stern, *George Howe*, 118-22.

verticalism".[17] However, I find that the building has a more ambiguous character; alternatively, it can be interpreted as a study in the simplification of mass, and its taut tile skin can be seen as an attempt to create one coherent vertical form as much as to suggest an airy volume.

If we try to summarize the characteristics of the modern skyscraper as typified in the work of Hood, Walker, and Kahn, can we identify a few general, but valid principles which define the style? I believe we can, and that they are the following: architecture as simple, sculptural mass (not volume), with particular attention to proportion and silhouette; the subordination of ornament to the expression of form (after about 1925, the ornament is non-historicist); and finally, attention to the problems of fenestration, i.e., accommodating the pattern of windows within the wall. The applicability of these general characteristics would, I believe, be supported if we looked at a hundred more buildings of the period by many other architects.

Since I have pursued a formalist analysis, I must hasten to emphasize that the skyscraper is only marginally a formal problem. As architects of the period continually stressed, the form of a tall building was usually a "given", dictated by the specific conditions of site, zoning, and above all, economics. Indeed, the principal programmatic requirement in skyscraper design is profit, and the primary function of a skyscraper is to make money. Economic considerations affect every design decision in a commercial building. With very few exceptions, one might well say that the axiom for skyscraper architects is "form follows finance".

This commercial reality can be illustrated by looking at another skyscraper of 1931—the mightiest of them all—the Empire State Building by Shreve, Lamb and Harmon (fig. 7). In 1930, while his firm was at work on the tower, Arthur Loomis Harmon summarized the general conditions of skyscraper design in an article which bears quoting at some length. He wrote:

> What are the limitations that mould the form? In bulk they are the shape of the property, the lighting of internal areas, the zoning regulations . . . and the demand that rentable area bear a proper relation to the total cubage to produce a paying investment. In height buildings are limited by the area of the prop-

17. Hitchcock and Johnson, *The International Style*, 156.

Fig. 7. Shreve, Lamb and Harmon, Empire State Building, 1930-31 (author).

erty; the economic consideration involved in the cost of steel; particularly the relation of height to base governing the wind bracing; and the economic and physical limitations in height for elevators.[18]

In another article, the firm's chief designer, William Lamb, discussed the specifics of the Empire State program: "a fixed budget, no space more than twenty-eight feet from window to corridor, as many stories of such space as possible, an exterior of limestone, and a completion date of May 1, 1931, a year and six months from the beginning of the sketches".[19] Indeed, speed of construction was the most important factor from the viewpoint of the owner, who was anxious to turn expenditures into revenues, and the most frustrating one for the architects, forced to design under extreme time pressure. Every aspect of the Empire State Building was developed under this criterion of speed. For example, the innovative metal window and spandrel system was designed specifically to be produced quickly and in enormous quantities, and to be installed without special handwork.

How, finally, do we assess PSFS in the context of skyscraper design, both formal and economic, that I have described? The long gestation period of its design and construction (from 1929 until its completion in 1932) allowed an uncommon luxury of time for planning and revision. The quality of materials and detailing throughout the building has been described as unparalleled[20]—though it must be added that even in the Depression economy of 1931, opulent lobbies, like the impressive gray marble and metal halls of the Empire State Building, were fairly standard. Perhaps the greatest aesthetic indulgence in PSFS, however, lay in the redesign of the structural frame for the sake of artistic expression. Moving the end piers to the exterior walls in order to express the verticalism of the steel skeleton required special bracing and complicated the interior subdivision of the office spaces. No such extravagance is conceivable in the other commercial towers that I have discussed.

There is really very little that is typical about PSFS. The formal and stylistic differences that separate it from contemporary skyscrapers are

18. Arthur Loomis Harmon, "The Design of Office Buildings", *The Architectural Forum* 52 (June 1930): 819.

19. William F. Lamb, "The Empire State Building", *The Architectural Forum* 54 (January 1931): 4.

20. Jordy, *American Buildings*, 115-16, and Stern, *George Howe*, 128-29.

apparent at a glance. As the first skyscraper in the International Style, PSFS (though derivative of European aesthetics) was wholly original in its American context. Yet, as an example of modern, machine-age architecture, PSFS was a Rolls-Royce, not a Ford Model A.

William Lescaze and CBS: A Case Study in Corporate Modernism

BY DENNIS P. DOORDAN

During the period 1934 to 1949, the Columbia Broadcasting System provided William Lescaze with a series of commissions that, considered together, constitute one of the largest, most varied, and most important bodies of work in his entire career.[1] Lescaze was responsible for the design of a major new broadcasting facility, the interior design of studio and office spaces, the design of a variety of studio furnishings such as microphones and clocks, the design of a mobile broadcasting vehicle, and the graphic design for CBS facilities across the country. A careful review of the material indicates that Lescaze made a major contribution to the development of a fundamentally new twentieth-century building type, the broadcast facility. He also contributed to the definition of the role of the corporate designer by demonstrating the advantages of treating design as an integral part of corporate planning.

The sheer volume of his work for CBS renders it impossible to discuss all of it within the limitations of a short essay such as this. I would like, therefore, to look at a selection of CBS commissions representative of the range of tasks Lescaze performed for the network and indicative of the character of the design solutions he offered.

His very first job for CBS involved the conversion of an existing Broadway theater, the Avon theater on West Forty-fifth Street, into a radio broadcasting facility. Preserved in the William Lescaze Papers at Syracuse University is a section drawing of the theater. The drawing bears the notation, "First drawing made by Mr. Lescaze for CBS. Sept. 13 - 34. Approved by Mr. Paley." The theater was renamed the Columbia Radio Playhouse. Economic reasons dictated CBS's decision to lease and remodel an existing space rather than construct a

1. I first began working on this topic while on the faculty of the Syracuse University School of Architecture. A major part of the research for this paper was funded with a Syracuse University Senate Research Grant. I wish to thank the University and, in particular, the staff of the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections for their invaluable assistance on this project. All the illustrations used in this article are from the George Arents Research Library.

new facility. Lescaze eventually converted several theaters for CBS according to the formula he developed for the Columbia Radio Playhouse.

In order to adjust the acoustical properties of the theater for broadcast purposes, Lescaze installed a series of plywood panels across the rear and sides of the stage. He designed two booths flanking the proscenium, one for the engineers handling the broadcast and the other to accommodate network and program sponsors. The stark character of Lescaze's additions contrast strongly with the ornate interior of the existing theater in a manner that boldly proclaims the novelty of the new medium of radio (fig. 1).

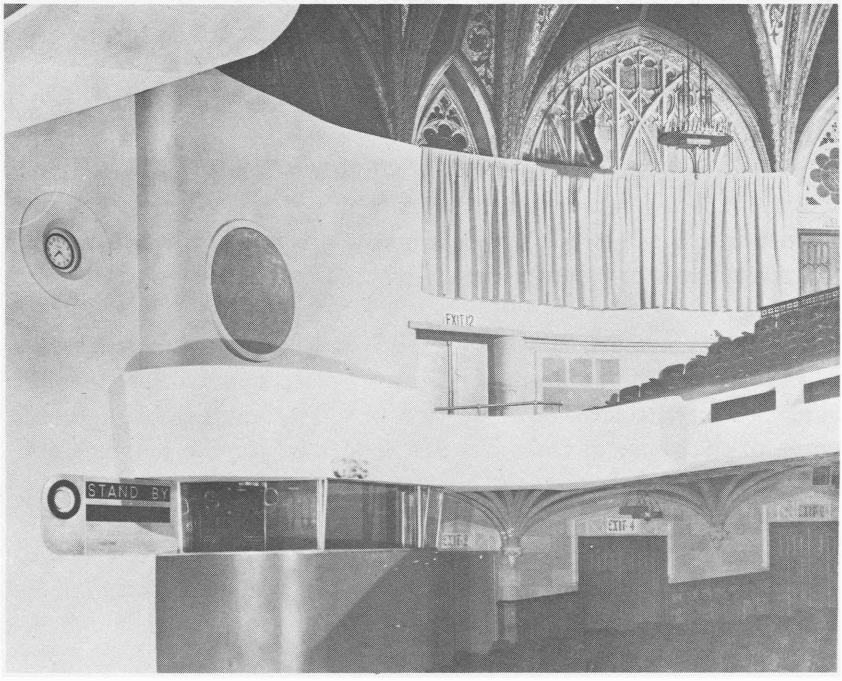


Fig. 1. Control Booth, Columbia Radio Playhouse, New York City, 1934, William Lescaze, designer.

The contrast between the old and the new in the Columbia Radio Playhouse is significant because it vividly illustrates an important aspect of Lescaze's work for CBS. From the beginning of his involvement with the Columbia Broadcasting System, he made no attempt to disguise or camouflage the new forms required by radio facilities. Instead, he identified the essential components of a broadcast studio and

sought an appropriate set of forms for the task.

Lescaze's treatment of the studio control booth is typical of his approach to designing a broadcast facility. He placed the booth to provide easy, immediate visual contact between the control booth staff and the performers. The glass enclosing the booth is slanted to avoid distracting glare or reflections. The STAND BY and ON THE AIR signs are prominently positioned for maximum visibility, and the all-important studio clock is isolated for easy reading. The form, location, and graphic design of every detail is carefully considered to insure that necessary information is conveyed quickly and unambiguously. The large number of drawings preserved in the Lescaze Papers at Syracuse attests to the careful study Lescaze gave each and every studio fixture.

Lescaze extended the formula he developed for studio spaces to other areas of the broadcast facility as well. In the mid-1930s Lescaze designed the reception area for CBS corporate offices at 485 Madison Avenue in New York. In this early design the receptionist's station is partially screened. In subsequent CBS lobbies the receptionist's station is fully screened, imitating the booth form of the broadcast studio. Mounted on the wall of the waiting room is a unit housing a radio speaker, studio indicator, and a clock. The slanted surfaces of this unit echo the slanted panels of the studio control-booth glass. Lescaze's consistent treatment of details such as clock faces, signage, and lighting fixtures unified the disparate studio and office spaces. The smooth surfaces, fluid forms, and unadorned wall planes of the reception area have clear parallels in Lescaze's residential interiors of the 1930s.

But CBS wanted more from Lescaze than a design solution to the problem of arranging studio and office interiors. CBS wanted a design solution to the problem of creating an identity. Beginning in the early 1930s, William S. Paley, president of CBS, embarked on a deliberate program to promote CBS through innovative programming, shrewd management of the relationship between the network and its affiliates, and a serious, sustained effort to create a distinctive identity for CBS within the competitive broadcast industry.[2] William Lescaze played

2. For a history of the broadcast industry during the period covered by this paper see: Erik Barnouw, *A Tower in Babel*, vol. 1, and *The Golden Web*, vol. 2, of *A History of Broadcasting in the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966 and 1968). For William S. Paley's own account of his career and the rise of CBS see: William S. Paley, *As It Happened: A Memoir* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1979).

an important role in shaping the visual identity of CBS in the 1930s and 1940s.

An excellent example of Lescaze's contribution to this program is his work on the design of a new microphone housing. In 1935 CBS commissioned Lescaze to design a case to house a standard microphone assembly then in use throughout the industry. The idea was to transform a stock microphone assembly into a unique piece of equipment by inserting it into a new outer shell. The new housing would visually distinguish CBS from other stations and provide a uniform, formal vocabulary for the entire CBS network.

Lescaze began by studying the problem in a series of free-hand sketches. Most of the early studies are profile sketches done in pencil on white or yellow tracing paper. Lescaze devoted particular attention to the shape of the arm supporting the microphone (fig. 2). The final design had to be adjustable in order to allow the microphone to rotate or swivel through an arc of forty-five degrees. The next step involved the preparation of detailed scaled drawings, including plans, elevations, and renderings of various proposals (fig. 3). The final step involved the construction of a model of a prototype for the microphone case (fig. 4).

A comparison between one of the detailed studies and the model reveals various considerations included in the design process. In figure 4 the arm supporting the microphone case is in the shape of a squared C. The microphone unit is mounted on the arm with screws set flush with the outer face of the bracket. On the model, however, large thumbscrews are used to mount the microphone. This change facilitated adjusting the angle of the microphone itself.

The other major change between the drawn proposal and the model is not strictly functional in origin. The curve of the arm on the model conforms now with other aspects of Lescaze's work for CBS. It is, for example, clearly related to the curved stairwall found in CBS station KNX in Hollywood, designed by Lescaze in 1936 (fig. 5). The formal parallel between the microphone case and the stair detail is important because it indicates that Lescaze considered each individual CBS project in the context of a larger, ongoing campaign to develop a coherent, consistent set of related forms that spanned a range from individual studio fixtures, to the design of an entire studio, to the design of the building that housed the studio.

In the 1930s American corporations turned in growing numbers to

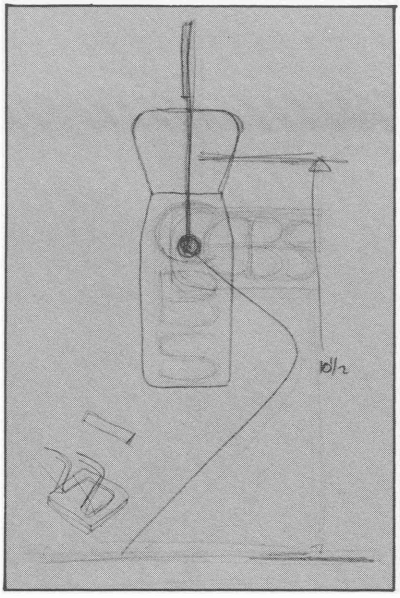


Fig. 2. Preliminary Study Drawing, Microphone Case, 1935, William Lescaze, designer.

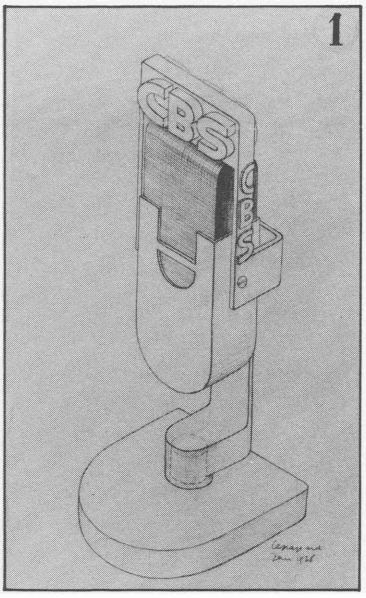


Fig. 3. Study Drawing, Microphone Case, 1936, William Lescaze, designer.

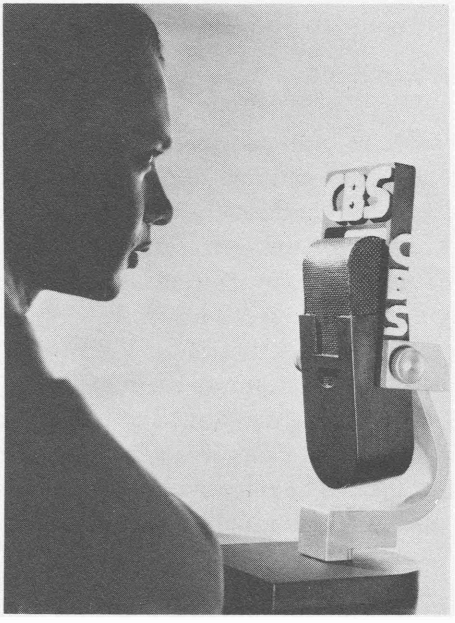


Fig. 4. Model, Microphone Case, 1936, William Lescaze, designer.

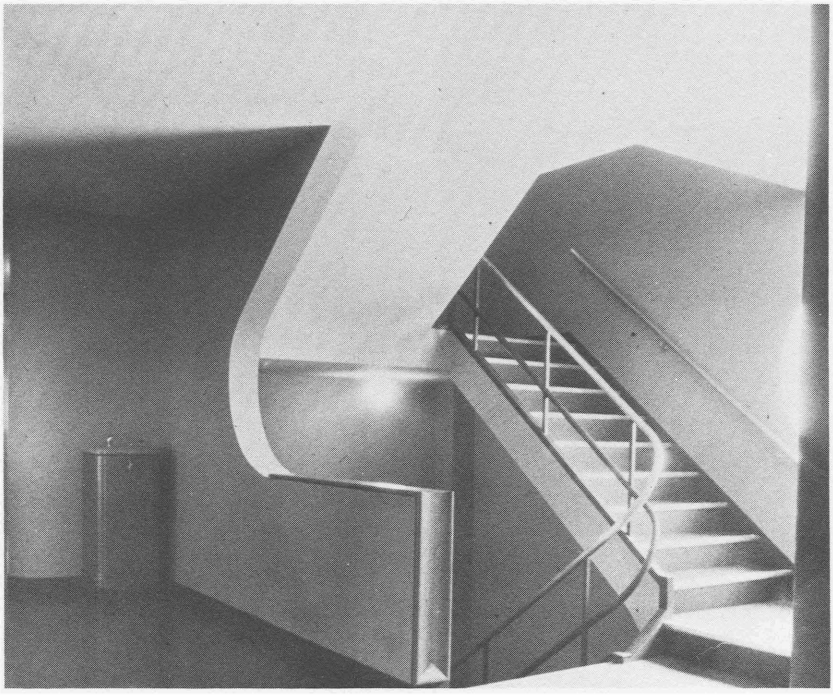


Fig. 5. Stairway, Station KNX, Hollywood, California, 1936-38,
William Lescaze, architect;
Earl Heitschmidt, associate architect.

the emerging profession of industrial design for assistance in achieving a number of goals: the rationalizing of design and manufacturing processes in order to correct deficiencies in production or marketing; the attracting of customers through innovative design solutions; the developing of a corporate identity that would convey a particular, desired image both to employees and to the public.[3]

A major part of Lescaze's activities for CBS belonged to this final category, the creation of a corporate identity. CBS had a very clear idea about what kind of image it wished to project through architecture and design. William S. Paley was actively involved in decisions regarding design at CBS. The relationship between Paley and Lescaze was personal as well as professional. In an interview Paley recalled at-

3. For more on the history of Industrial Design see: John Heskett, *Industrial Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); and Arthur J. Pulos, *American Design Ethic: A History of Industrial Design* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1983).

tending parties at the Lescaze townhouse.[4] Another key figure at CBS in those years was Paul Kesten. Kesten came to the network from a career in advertising. His position at the network was described by one former employee as "vice-president in charge of the future".[5] Kesten was not an operations manager. Rather, his role was that of a "concept" man, responsible for a wide range of ideas concerning every aspect of the network. Paley later recalled his association with Kesten in these words, "We saw eye to eye from the start on the importance of design and good taste."[6]

Both Paley and Kesten were aware of new ideas concerning architecture and design. Both men had seen Modern Architecture in Europe, particularly in Paris, and were enthusiastic about progressive European design. Paley considered Modern Architecture to be functional, efficient, and attractive. He perceived a natural affinity between the broadcast industry and modern design. CBS's image of itself was that of a progressive corporation in a progressive and growing industry. For Paley and Paul Kesten, Modern Architecture had a look expressive of the progressive aspects of contemporary culture.

In William Lescaze, CBS found an architect fluent in the language of contemporary modern European design, an architect who could solve the functional problems associated with creating a new building type and deliver an image—a "look" to use Paley's own word—appropriate to the rise of a new industry. In CBS, Lescaze found a client sensitive to the modernist aesthetic, a client searching for a compelling visual identity, and a client attuned to the promotional value of modern design. All of Lescaze's work for CBS was realistic in the sense that his designs were intended for construction. But many of his proposals remained unrealized due to budgetary restrictions or other limiting factors beyond his control.

In 1935 Lescaze was asked to prepare a design for a new CBS corporate headquarters building in Manhattan (fig. 6).The site was on the east side of Park Avenue between Fifty-eighth and Fifty-ninth Streets, close to several CBS studios and to the posh hotels favored by the star performers then courted by CBS. The architectural program called for retail space along the avenue, two auditoria with a capacity of approximately 1100 people each, a number of smaller

4. Interview with William S. Paley, 14 June 1983.
5. Telephone interview with Adrian Murphy, 18 July 1983.
6. Paley, *As It Happened*, 64.

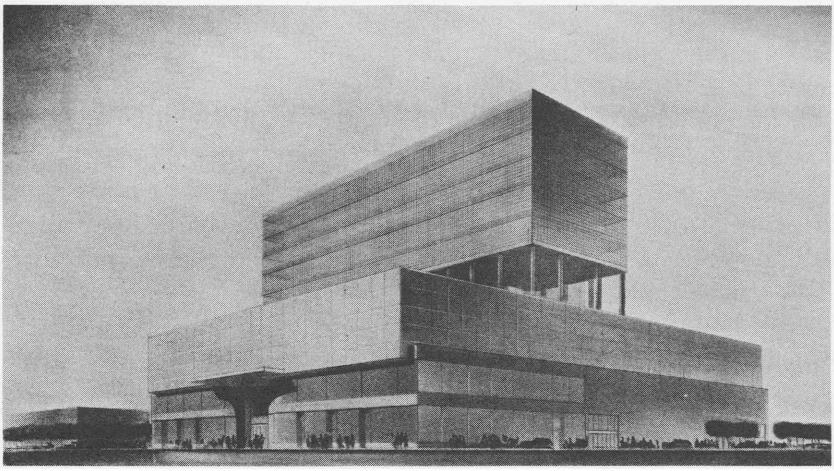


Fig. 6. CBS Building, Park Avenue, New York City, unbuilt project, 1936, William Lescaze, architect.

studios, and office space for executives and staff.[7] Lescaze split the facility into two distinct parts: a four-story base containing the retail and studio spaces and a five-story office slab lifted over the base on *pilotis*. Lescaze's proposal included provisions for the future addition of two more office floors. The office slab was set back seventy-two feet from the Park Avenue facade. Lescaze inserted a small rooftop garden in the space between the studio and retail base and the office slab.

Certain elements of this scheme are clearly reminiscent of the PSFS building completed three years previously. The clear distinction between the base of the building and the office slab, for example, is derived from Lescaze's experience with the PSFS building. The manner in which Lescaze isolates the elevator core and expresses it as a separate element to the rear of the site repeats one of the crucial elements of the PSFS design.

This particular project had to be abandoned when CBS was unable to acquire title to the entire site. Several other schemes for various sites in the upper Fifties of Manhattan also came to naught. Although

7. This project remained virtually unknown until Ann Lorraine Lanmon published a rendering and a brief description of the scheme in her doctoral dissertation "The Role of William Lescaze in the Introduction of the International Style to the United States", (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Delaware, 1979). The Lescaze Papers at Syracuse include a number of plans and elevations for this project which I am currently preparing for publication.

both Lescaze and CBS were frustrated in their attempt to build a major new broadcasting facility in Manhattan, they ultimately realized their ambition with the completion of a new home for CBS affiliate KNX in Hollywood, designed in 1936 and completed in 1938 (figs. 7 and 8).

Fig. 7. Station KNX, Hollywood, California, 1936-38, William Lescaze, architect; Earl Heitschmidt, associate architect.

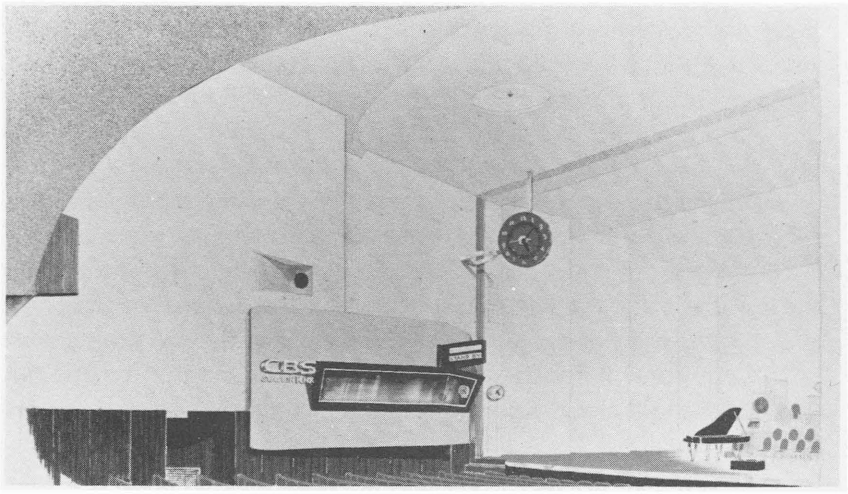


Fig. 8. Broadcast Studio, Station KNX, Hollywood, California, 1936-38, William Lescaze, designer.

The architectural program for KNX was similar to the program for the unbuilt Park Avenue project: a variety of studio spaces, office space, commercial and retail space. Although the final design of KNX arranges these requirements in a different way, there are powerful parallels between the Park Avenue and Hollywood buildings. In each, the studios are housed in low compact blocks at ground level. The office area in both projects is expressed as a slab lifted over the studios on *pilotis*. At KNX, the commercial space, including a restaurant, occupies a prominent location along the Sunset Boulevard street frontage.

On the exterior of station KNX, Lescaze extended one edge of the office slab to create a billboard-like projection with the CBS call letters aligned vertically on it. This sign, positioned at right angles to the street, announces the station's identity to passing motorists as well as to pedestrians. Lescaze attached great importance to the signage on his buildings. He once wrote:

> A sign need not be ugly . . . I have yet to see one physical or mechanical necessity in any building which needed to be ugly. If a sign is ugly, it is often because it was an after-thought, that is, something not thought out beforehand, not taken into consideration when the building was designed, . . . For KNX the wall of the building itself was shaped and designed to receive the sign, and the sign was thus designed as a real part of the building.[8]

Lescaze had, perhaps, his greatest success in creating a uniform and distinctive visual identity for CBS in his coordination of graphics, signage, and architecture. From the Columbia Radio Playhouse in Manhattan to KNX in Hollywood, Lescaze produced a CBS style that extended from coast to coast (figs. 9 and 10).

For the interiors at KNX, Lescaze applied the same solutions he had developed originally for CBS theater conversions and office interiors in New York. The information booth in the lobby of KNX is treated like a studio control booth and defined by slanted planes of glass. The public studio at KNX repeats the same formula he devised several years earlier; the control booth occupies a prominent position to one side of the stage, and clocks and the necessary signage are quickly located and easily read.

8. "Signs Should Not Be an Afterthought Says Noted Architect", *Signs of the Times*, January 1944: 7. A copy of this article is preserved in the Lescaze Papers at Syracuse.

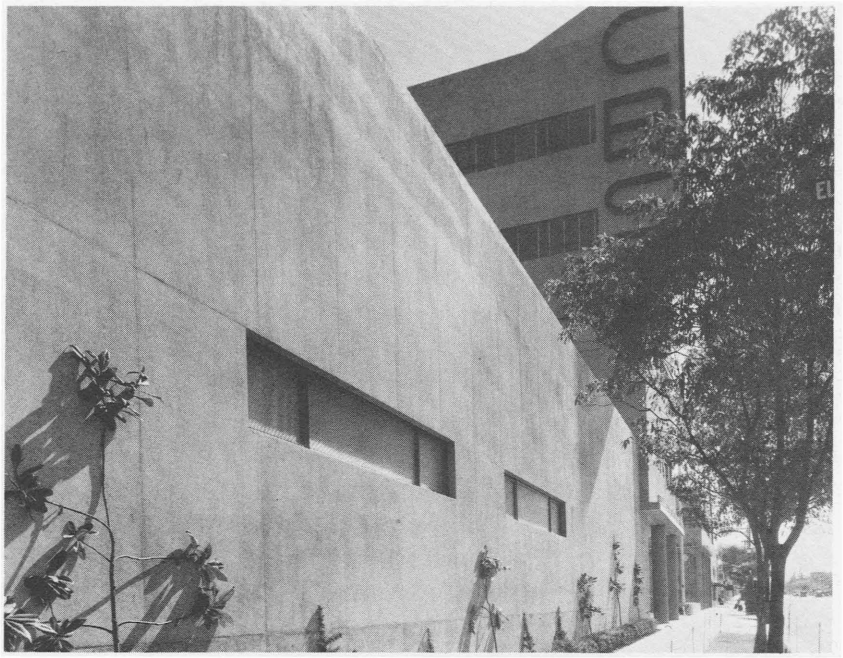


Fig. 9. Sign, Station KNX, Hollywood, California, 1936-38,
William Lescaze, architect;
Earl Heitschmidt, associate architect.

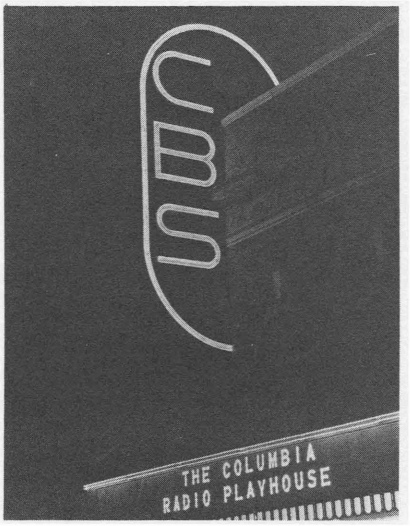


Fig. 10. Sign, The Columbia Radio Playhouse, New York City, 1934,
William Lescaze, architect.

The KNX building was the largest single commission Lescaze received from CBS.[9] He was responsible for the architectural design of the entire building, the design of the interior spaces—both public and private—and the design of the studio furnishings. Late in his life William Lescaze made the following comment regarding Modern Architecture in general. It is particularly appropriate in connection with his work for CBS.

> The visible results are forms which are beautiful, economical and efficient. The unseen results are greater happiness, better health for a greater number of human beings, the satisfaction of being honest and of being in tune with the life of our own times.[10]

A comparison between Lescaze's work for CBS and Raymond Hood's work for NBC does much to clarify Lescaze's distinctive—and honest—approach to the problem of the broadcast studio. Hood designed studios for NBC and in an article in *Architectural Record* he explained his approach to the assignment.[11] Hood reasoned that the broadcast performer lacked the stimulation of a traditional concert hall. He tried, therefore, to simulate the effect of an authentic concert hall through the use of theatrical lighting. He attempted to negate the obtrusive presence of the control booth by placing it to the rear of the stage and keeping it within the plane of the wall. Hood's studios for NBC were actually mock theaters. Lescaze's studios, in contrast, were conceived as radio broadcast studios, not dignified parlors or imitation theaters. His forthright and honest treatment of the theme is one of the most impressive and consistent aspects of his work for CBS, and one of his most important contributions to the evolution of a modern broadcasting facility.

For William Lescaze, modern meant functional. He was, first and foremost, a functionalist committed to the belief that every design problem contained within it the seed of its own solution. He accepted the

9. For more on CBS station KNX see: "CBS Broadcasting Studio Hollywood, California", *Architectural Forum* 68 (June 1938): 454-64; "Plant for CBS Hollywood", *Architectural Concrete* 4, no. 3 (1938): 2-7; "CBS Builds New Home for KNX", *Electronics* 11 (April 1938): 20-25. Earl Heitschmidt was the associate architect for KNX.

10. William Lescaze, undated typescript, Lescaze Papers, published by Lanmon, "The Role of William Lescaze", 458.

11. Raymond Hood, "The National Broadcasting Studios, New York", *Architectural Record* 64 (July 1928).

value systems of his clients. His studios for CBS reflect corporate virtues—economy, efficiency, adaptability. He welcomed the contributions of technical experts from related disciplines as part of the process of analyzing and solving design problems. In all of his work for CBS, Lescaze functioned as a member of an integrated team of technical experts, acoustical consultants, structural engineers, electricians, and advertising representatives. Lescaze was responsible for the architectural resolution of a variety of technical, commercial, public relations, and artistic concerns. The KNX building is an outstanding example of the degree to which Lescaze could resolve those various concerns in a convincing architectural entity. Lescaze could legitimately experience the satisfaction of being honest and of being in tune with the life of his own time. In his entire career he was never more in tune with his time and the needs and aspirations of his client than during the years of his association with CBS. He ably responded not only to the diverse demands of new building types, but also to the challenge of new design tasks for the modern architect and designer.

European Modernism in an American Commercial Context

BY ROBERT BRUCE DEAN

This is a talk about a young Swiss designer who came to the United States with the simple immigrant goal of practising his craft—and found out what it meant to be an American architect. He groped his way in, he figured out how to operate here, and he articulated goals for himself and his profession. Eventually, he completed a group of buildings which helped to further these goals and to shift the course of American art. But, much as he may have wanted to, Lescaze never quite confronted the underlying dilemmas of the artist in a democratic, mercantile society. Ultimately, he separated himself from his sources of patronage. His contemporary influence and his place in history were both encumbered by this loss of position, and yet he never fully realized how or why it happened.

I hope to shed some light on why Lescaze's career took this course—on why this was perhaps inevitable. I also hope to make some observations, based upon Lescaze's career, about the novel characteristics of the artist's role in a democratic society and a secular, materialist age. I'll sum up in advance by saying that Lescaze was buffeted by three basic, cultural forces, two of which were indigenous to his adopted country and alien to him. The third was brought by Lescaze and a few of his contemporaries and was introduced as an alien force within American architecture. Our profession of architecture is still torn by the competition of these three basic forces.

I will speak first about the third force, which consisted of the influences which Lescaze carried with him from Europe and sought to implant in a new ground. The basis of these ideas was, quite simply, the concept of architecture as abstract modern art, strongly influenced by cubist aesthetics, functional planning, and a socialist political vision. Lescaze in Zürich had been attracted to the study of architecture by his exposure to the new art and had rejoiced at the opportunity to work with a great proto-modernist teacher, Karl Moser.

Of course, we know that Lescaze's education in Zürich does not place him at the seat of basic innovation in abstract Modern Architecture—at least as history has recorded it. The students of Behrens in Berlin were much more ready to codify and polemicize their work. The ascen-

dancy of the Bauhaus and the Werkbund under the leadership of Behrens' students created an environment in which the new architecture could be pursued idealistically. The field became identified less as a building craft and more as an ongoing discussion of formal, spatial, technical, and political concepts.

Lescaze's education under Moser, by contrast, was less polemical—more involved with evolutions of form than with avant-garde revolutions in the entire sociocultural structure. Thus, while it was natural for the German group to promulgate their ideas in the purest possible way through state-financed demonstration projects and through the institution of a school, it was equally natural for Lescaze to seek out an environment where society had issued its architects a real mandate to build. In the 1920s this environment was New York—a city undergoing an incredible building boom and, at the same time, a center of tremendous artistic dynamism. However, New York emphatically was not a place where ideals were pursued for their own sake.

Into this environment Lescaze would carry the teachings of Moser and his early employer Henri Sauvage. In New York Lescaze would have to work out on his own what he meant by Modern Architecture.

He would succeed faster than he had dared hope in building under his own name works which reflected his ideals. As the principal carrier of Europe's new cubist design ethic to the headquarters city of American architecture, Lescaze would exert an important personal influence upon American practitioners. Yet, the very nature of his chosen place of work would preclude the kind of finished polemical statement—whether in print, in built work, or even in his own mind—that would be on a par with the Bauhaus or the Jeanneret studio. For instance, Lescaze could persuade the American architecture magazines to publish some speculative drawings of houses, as long as they contained a powerful gimmick, like an airplane hangar. And in the 1920s his one opportunity to build a demonstration design project would be financed not by the Werkbund, but by the furniture department at Macy's.

Considering the degree of professional solitude in which he worked (though I should not give the impression here of artistic solitude) and the steady pressure which his early clients exerted to avoid becoming art patrons, one must admit that Lescaze grew enormously as a designer during the 1920s. By the time his two big breaks came along in 1929—Leopold Stokowski's commission for the Oak Lane Nursery

School and George Howe's invitation to collaborate on the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society building—Lescaze had established his credentials as one of only two or three true American interpreters of European cubist architecture.

Eventually, the American architectural profession would turn vigorously toward this architecture. They would modify its polemic to suit the needs of American corporate society. Of course, responsibility for this evolution does not belong solely to Lescaze. Hitchcock and Johnson's International Style exhibition of 1932 popularized both the people and the ideals of European modernism. And eventually, the arrival in America of Gropius, Mies, Breuer, and others focused enormous attention on Modern Architecture. But William Lescaze must be given a full measure of credit for initiating and shaping this interest, because he presented some of the very first striking images of the new architecture to American eyes.

This discussion leads us neatly into the mainstream of twentieth-century architectural history, in which the innovations of Modern Architecture were seen to transform American culture. However, Lescaze is interesting to me for a somewhat different reason. His career prefigures the fate of Modern Architecture as it became influenced by the climate of American culture. To examine my point, we must look at the two indigenous cultural forces which Lescaze encountered in New York—forces which he never could have fully anticipated and, yet, which determined his fate as an architect.

The first of these I will call Romantic Materialism.

The early shapers of America's great experiment in democratic culture were strongly focused on the material world and belong, at least in some tangential way, to the history of materialist philosophy. They mistrusted existing European traditions of art as distractions from their societal mission—and even as destructive sources of artifice. For instance, John Adams, while visiting Europe and marvelling at its history, associated the great European works of art with tyranny and despotism. About his own land, he wrote, "The age of painting has not yet arrived in this country, and I hope it will not arrive very soon."[1] A democratic culture was supposed to look forward, through eyes of homely simplicity, and should not lend its support to the non-productive practitioners of luxury and self-reflection.

1. As quoted by Constance Rourke in *The Roots of American Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1942), 5.

Adams did envision the gradual development of artistic expression in America, but he was nervous about it. He feared that, lacking the European art patrons' sophisticated taste, the American people were likely to bestow "their applauses and adorations too often . . . on artifices and tricks".[2] In addition, Adams realized that since the artist does not contribute to material production, the public would expect to receive the fruits of his efforts for free.

The dilemmas which Adams described have confronted every person who has tried to render American culture into physical form. Not surprisingly, the commercial arts—including commercial architecture and industrial design—have fostered some of our solidest and most natural aesthetic traditions. In these media the underlying romanticism of the American experiment come through. But, only at brief moments (and usually only by coincidence) has our commercialized romanticism communicated in an understandable way with the high-art traditions of our parent cultures in Europe. This connection was obviously essential to the ability of Lescaze the European to operate as an American commercial architect. However, the ghost of John Adams might disdain such a connection as irrelevant or counterproductive.

Lescaze, coming to the United States in 1919, adopted American culture willingly in the manner of the traditional immigrant. He chose not to shrink from the commercial orientation that he found—in fact, he played a major role in converting Modern Architecture into a commercial medium. This is in clear distinction to the later group of modernist immigrants, who had built their reputations under highly centralized government patronage in Europe. Almost universally, they sought the shelter of academic and governmental institutions when they arrived.

But, whatever may have come later, we are still speaking of the post-World War I years when Lescaze was building his practice. During this period the maturing of our romantic material culture into a worldwide force was moving toward a climax, already exerting its influence along the kinds of mercantile paths that might have pleased John Adams. Henry Luce, the magazine magnate, described this phenomenon in his famous *Life* magazine essay "The American Century". Luce noted that "American jazz, Hollywood movies, American slang, American machines and patented products are . . . the only things that every

2. Rourke, *Roots of American Culture*, 4-5.

community in the world, from Zanzibar to Hamburg, recognizes in common."[3]

Lewis Mumford, in his book *The Brown Decades*, had applied a similar ethic specifically to architecture. He was describing the Chicago architects of the 1880s, but could have been describing William Lescaze's own self-image: "The architects of the day were not dwarfed by the business men, but stood shoulder to shoulder with them supplementing their deficiencies and sharing their strengths." [4]

Incidentally, Lescaze knew and admired Mumford, and recommended *The Brown Decades* as essential reading. Lescaze also was aware that he could draw upon the forcefulness of this romantic material culture and, so, shaped his interpretation of the new architecture from within the values of that culture. He implicitly understood that, as opposed to the ongoing socialist experiments of central Europe, America already had an ingenuously mechanistic, machine-age society. Such a society was not going to accept an architecture that was, to use Lescaze's own negative description, "machine-rhapsodic". Instead, American commercial culture during the 1920s was trying desperately to humanize and romanticize its machinery. Lescaze's rich play of materials, of planar surfaces, and of volumetric devices springs from that understanding. However, it was precisely his responsiveness to American commercial values that weakened his ability to communicate ideologically with the German leaders of Modernism.

But paradoxically, the sponsorship of Modern Architecture as an aesthetic force in this country eventually shifted almost entirely toward the ideologies that were coming out of central Europe. Lescaze's desire to be an American professional—a member of a commercial culture—became his undoing. This strange turn of events reflects the other indigenous cultural force which greeted Lescaze when he arrived in America.

As wealth had grown in this country, this force had grown with it, countervailing the Romantic Materialism which I have just been describing. I won't honor this force with such an imposing name—I'll simply call it cultural insecurity. Ironically, Lescaze owed much of his early success to being surrounded by this insecurity. He presented himself and his work as sources for achieving European-style refine-

3. Henry R. Luce, "The American Century", *Life*, 17 February 1941, 65.

4. Lewis Mumford, *The Brown Decades: A Study of the Arts in America, 1865-1895* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1931), 146.

ment and artistic significance.

Lescaze was on hand to witness the unfinished edifice of democratic art—of Romantic Materialism, if you will—being bequeathed to later generations almost solely within the commercial media. (Frank Lloyd Wright inherited a small portion of this legacy, but he spent it primarily to glorify himself.) Meanwhile, the sons and daughters of America's mercantile elite chased the magic of what one of my teachers used to call "cultural density" in the capitals of Europe. In a previous generation this phenomenon had first been represented in architecture by a shift toward French neoclassicism. But, in the 1920s American cultural insecurity became the primary medium of influence for abstract Modern Architecture. Lescaze, while beguiled by the dynamism of American commercial culture, could never assimilate into that culture as fully as his fellow naturalized-American, Raymond Loewy. Lescaze could modify and adapt, but could not abandon, the avant-garde sources of his art. Nor would it be wise for him to do so, since his association with European trends lent him credibility in the social circles which were capable of generating patronage.

Curiously enough, when Europeans had begun abandoning their own nineteenth-century romantic traditions in favor of revolutionary aesthetic movements, they drew inspiration from such American commercial sources as the Chicago School skyscrapers, the movies of Charlie Chaplin and D.W. Griffith, and the grain elevators of Buffalo. But, by then, the American intellectual elite had largely abandoned these indigenous artifacts as evidence of anything profound. By the time William Lescaze established himself in New York social circles in the late 1920s, American art had become a totally schizophrenic environment. A mass commercial culture of huge proportions and tremendous dynamism was reaching out to the people at large and even beginning to colonize the parent cultures of Western Europe. Meanwhile, the American social elite appeared more and more like a colony, looking almost entirely to foreign and expatriate sources for art and expecting only good will and gentlemanly behavior from the local practitioners.

Thus, Lescaze was finding acceptance in two conflicting realms of patronage, and this was a unique platform among American architects, with unique opportunities for promulgating the ideas he believed in. But, at the same time, he was in a highly unstable position from which to launch a career. And I doubt that a self-involved, egoistic personality

like William Lescaze was very much aware of the complexities of his situation; instead, his primary perception during the 1930s appears to have been that he had found the route to the successful practice of his art.

In 1942 William Lescaze published his autobiography. At that time he was ostensibly at the height of his career, although the war was holding down the overall level of architectural activity. But, in terms of his primary goal of advancing the state of the art of architecture, Lescaze's career was over. He would live and practise architecture for twenty-seven more years, but he would become increasingly overshadowed by the newly arrived figures of Walter Gropius, Marcel Breuer, Mies van der Rohe, and the home-grown talent following their lead. The spotlight of public attention would not shine again through the glass blocks of Lescaze's house and studio on Forty-eighth Street and would not bring with it the client patronage upon which Lescaze's art depended. Ironically, Lescaze's youthful goal of establishing cubist Modern Architecture in America had been achieved (Philip Johnson could declare that the Battle of Modern Architecture had been won); but the postwar building boom would bring Lescaze only the most constrained commercial commissions. Meanwhile, Mies, Gropius, and Breuer would all find the opportunity to complete monumental projects in Manhattan. And CBS, Lescaze's best client of the late 1930s, would not even consider him when they built their huge, new television production facilities or their long-delayed, new headquarters in Manhattan. Lescaze only gradually recognized the degree to which he had lost his position in the profession, but by 1960 he was bitterly asking himself how and when the curtain of silence had dropped around him.

The answer to Lescaze's question lies in the nature of the professional role he carved out for himself, far more than it does in the skill or character of his design work. Lescaze had managed to make himself into a unique bridge figure, who brought European avant-garde forms into contact with American traditions of democratic and commercial art. Unlike the newly arrived Bauhaus architects, Lescaze intuitively understood the fundamental differences between American materialist traditions and the German materialist culture that was fostering abstract art in Europe. He was not an intellectual; he did not theorize about these differences, but an awareness of them shows up in his work and his professional attitudes. Lescaze, the immigrant, chose to straddle

the schism between a utilitarian, mercantile America and a socialist, utopian Germany.

Lescaze states this perception simply in his autobiography, using fewer "ism" words than I find myself using:

> There is nothing more or less 'international' about 'modern' architecture than there is about 'modern' man. They are both international and national. . . . The Prussian general, the Spanish fisherman, the Eskimo, the cowboy, the American tycoon, . . . [all follow] the same basic design. The nationalism always shows up in the details, in the way of walking, talking, language, the food eaten, the clothes worn—and so it does in buildings. Modern architecture is as international and national as was Gothic architecture.[5]

He went on to describe how scholars of the Gothic focused on the *differences* in form from country to country, while scholars of Modern Architecture focused on the lowest common denominator of *similarities* from place to place—thus limiting the scope and cultural relevance of the new architecture.

To Lescaze, the international denominators of Modern Architecture were functionalist planning and a vaguely cubist sense of form. The national denominator of an American Modern Architecture pursued our romantic tradition of democratic art. As Lescaze wrote, "Architecture is the art of making the content and the forms of a civilization coincide. . . . Architecture [expresses] a people and [gives] to them and to others a visible image of their aspirations."[6] He fondly quoted Louis Sullivan, and even Walt Whitman, in his attempt to connect with American traditions of art.

American democratic art, as Henry Luce had pointed out, was probably a commercial art. Lescaze understood this fact and articulated it by describing the symbiosis between business and art in architecture:

> If the definition of a businessman implies an ability to think solely in terms of a profit from one's business, then the architect is not a businessman. But if the definition implies the ability to think first of all in terms of the client's interests, how they can best be served, by what kind of services, . . . then the architect is a businessman. . . . Although I feel that our greatest

5. William Lescaze, *On Being an Architect* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), 76.
6. Lescaze, *On Being an Architect*, 22-23.

> need at the present time is that our architects be artists—creative artists—to be successful artists they must be good businessmen. . . . That sense of happy balance which comes from every work of art . . . must be constantly maintained between the respective costs and purposes of so many [individual] items and the cost and purpose of the whole.[7]

Lescaze presented himself as a commercial artist who could deliver businesslike services when speaking with clients like CBS or Libby-Owens-Ford. But he also stressed the importance of art—the magic of his design work. Lescaze envisioned himself as a commercial designer, producing not only architecture and design, but also a pervasive corporate identity. Lescaze helped to pioneer this dual role for the American architect. He did not develop that role into the mature form later achieved by firms such as Eero Saarinen and Associates, but he understood that giving personality to the mechanistic institution of the American corporation could be consistent with the goals of both modernism and American art.

However, Lescaze never escaped from his other role as a plaything of café society. Indeed, his social connections constituted his first and by far most successful source of architectural patronage. For example, even his most famous commercial design commission, for the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, came about through connections within a social milieu in which he was seen to represent Europe's superior artistic traditions.

When the "real" European modernists—the architects who had come of age in the polemical atmosphere of the Bauhaus—arrived in America, Lescaze, the European artist, became an obsolete concept. Suddenly, he was solely Lescaze the American commercial architect. Paradoxically, this was exactly what he had set out to be—but the nature of patronage for an American architect was rapidly changing. No longer would the architect be asked to assume any role as interpreter of romantic art traditions. Suddenly, business was business and art was strictly a strange visitor from another culture. And the commercial architect was a businessman. Lescaze observed what was happening to him, as the new European faces supplanted his in the salons:

> The men and women who promote these [avant-garde] cliques form small packs and run, baying, after the newest modern

7. Lescaze, *On Being an Architect*, 103-4.

> architect to appear on the horizon. . . . They then put vine leaves in his hair, a fine apple between his teeth, and show him off, with his work, wherever they have showing resources. . . . After a while these cliques cool and rush off in other directions leaving their most recent exhibit to starve in his cage or gather his own nuts in his own tree or to be a man and stand on his own feet again.[8]

William Lescaze came to this country to be a creative man of action—the kind of man Henry Luce admired and Lewis Mumford wrote about—commercial in outlook yet profound in impact and cultural representation. There was a much more ready reception, however, for the kind of artistic charlatan predicted by John Adams—the man who could arrive from a more ancient land and play to America's cultural insecurities. The conflict between these opposing roles offered, and continues to offer, a difficult challenge for the American architect.

Lescaze blundered into the latter identity decried by Adams. He strove, sometimes desperately, to achieve the romantic ideal perceived by Luce. And for a brief but significant period, extending for twelve years from the PSFS in Philadelphia to the Longfellow building in Washington, Lescaze connected with a few of Luce's creative men of action. He began to achieve his goal of making cubist modernism fit in Walt Whitman's rustic empire.

8. Lescaze, *On Being an Architect*, 74-75.

The William Lescaze Symposium Panel Discussion

EDITED BY DENNIS P. DOORDAN

One session of the symposium was devoted to a panel discussion. The organizers of the symposium invited three prominent architects to participate as respondents: Stuart Cohen of Cohen and Nereim Architects, Chicago; Werner Seligmann, Dean, School of Architecture, Syracuse University; and Robert A. M. Stern of Robert A. M. Stern, Architects, New York City. The other members of the panel were Robert B. Dean, Lindsay Stamm Shapiro, Carol Willis, and myself.

The panel discussion began with comments by each respondent concerning the exhibition and material presented earlier in the symposium. A general discussion involving all members of the panel followed. As Carol Willis noted, the panel seemed divided between those who measured Lescaze's contribution according to the established tenets of orthodox Modernism and those who sought a new critical framework for evaluating Lescaze's contribution to the rise of modern design in America based upon typological, professional, and commercial criteria.

The session was tape-recorded and what follows is an edited transcript of the discussion. It was a difficult task. I was concerned primarily with the problem of shortening the transcript for publication. For the most part this effort involved the elimination of repetitions and passages peripheral to the major themes of the symposium. In addition, I was obliged to reconstruct spoken sentence fragments so as to make them more readable. I have attempted in every way to retain as much as possible of the actual text of the discussion. All of the comments are presented in the order in which they were made.

STUART COHEN: It seems to me that we are being asked to make some sort of retrospective reconsideration of Lescaze's career and its relationship to a certain period of American architecture. To do this, we need to ask three things. First, we should ask what have we learned about Lescaze's role in the development of Modern Architecture in America. Second, we might ask questions about the differences, both ideological and practical, between European modernism and

developments in this country. Finally, we might ask about the relevance of this material for us today.

After looking at the exhibition and listening to the presentations today, I am convinced more than ever of Professor Jordy and Robert Stern's original assessments of the importance of the PSFS building. For me, that building clearly secures Lescaze's importance. He certainly is a good architect, and, like so many other architects, he had a moment when his convictions, his interests, and his vision of architecture corresponded with the times. We need only to recall numerous other architects from the period of the early development of Modern Architecture, who, like Lescaze, lived and continued to work after this early period. Gerrit Rietveld continued to build into the 1950s. Peter Behrens practised into the 1940s, as did Henri Van de Velde. So, we are left with a sticky question regarding the absence of Lescaze's later work from this exhibition and discussion.

Certainly, there are architects who invent and there are architects who practise by the exercise of judgement. And we might ask how is it that at a particular moment in time an architect like Lescaze would know what to build and twenty years later he would have lost that sense of architectural judgement. In his paper, Robert Dean suggests that it was due to a change in patronage with respect to Lescaze. I think it was probably something more complex than that. When Lescaze came here, Modern Architecture was, by definition, an avant-garde activity. As an artist-architect, Lescaze could think of his work as a presentation and a maintaining of that avant-garde tradition. Certainly by the 1950s, Modern Architecture, as it was being designed and built in this country by people like Mies van der Rohe, had a very different meaning for Americans. Mies' skyscrapers were not seen as being progressive in the sense in which Lescaze's work was.

In looking at Lescaze's work, I hope we could focus on the differences between modernism in Europe and America. It seems to me that European modern architects focused on two building types in their proposed political and social restructuring of the world, public housing and the skyscraper. In the minds of those architects, the skyscraper constituted the first truly new twentieth-century building type, and perhaps the only type for which the argument of the structural and functional determination of form could ever be plausible. We are reminded of the differences in the skyscraper as a European symbol of a technological world of the future and the skyscraper as an American

symbol of commerce.

If we accept the International Style as the definition of Modern Architecture, then PSFS was certainly the first modern skyscraper. It heralded what seemed like a terribly easy transformation of the skyscraper from the ultimate symbol of revolutionary modernism into a form that symbolized stability, power, and ultimately a total association with the conservative point of view of corporate America. In that respect, one of the interesting things that has come out of the presentations today, has to do with Lescaze's relationship with CBS and the whole notion of the architect in relation to the creation of a corporate identity.

Finally, I would like to comment very briefly on two things that were said at last night's session. Dean Seligmann, in his opening remarks, commented that the notion of Total Design, heralded in the PSFS building, was, in fact, not taken up in the United States. It seems to me that what Dean Seligmann was actually referring to is a certain type of doctrinaire modernism, the desire to totally control an environment from an aesthetic point of view. Yet, one of the things we find remarkable about the PSFS building is exactly the degree to which all the details, the furnishings, the interiors, et cetera, appear to be part of a seamless fabric. When that building was done, the whole conceptualization of what that space was—both formally and aesthetically—was so different from what had happened before that to simply take available furnishings and put them into that space seemed an impossibility. That building seemed to demand the invention of the fittings, the furniture, the lighting fixtures, and the clocks by the architects. I think that has a parallel with things going on today. Architects are now designing furniture to go into their interiors. Given the reconceptualization of architecture today and the introduction of traditional elements, it no longer seems possible to simply go out and buy some Mies or Wassily chairs.

The other remark that I found interesting last night was Professor Pulos' comment that he felt like he was coming to a wake, remembering a body of thought as it was being lowered into the vault. In terms of the way architecture, architectural education, and the professional all seem to have changed in the last ten years, it seems to me that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, architects have been reconnected with an ability to look at and appreciate history in a useful way. Certainly that seems to me to be why we are here today.

WERNER SELIGMANN: I think there are a number of issues that one can raise in connection with Lescaze. One that is of particular interest to me is the difference between Europe and the United States, and in particular, the effect the First World War had on the minds of the people of Europe that it did not have on the minds of the people of the United States.

In Germany and in Russia, the old social and political order was turned upside down. Architecture was now going to give a unique expression—a specific face—to the great experiment of the Weimar Republic and Communist Russia. The housing programs were concerned not just with replacing old housing, but with expressing the fact that housing was now the task of the nation as a whole.

It is significant that Lescaze came from Switzerland and not from Germany, Holland, or France. Knowing Switzerland and the work of Karl Moser, I cannot believe that cubism or anything having to do remotely with modern painting had a big impact on architectural design. Even though there was an active Werkbund in Switzerland, there was a very different cultural climate there. This must be kept in mind when one discusses the artistic as well as the social and political program of Lescaze's work.

In America, there was a sense of relief that the war was over, but also, I think, a sense that Europe and European concerns were very remote. In the 1920s, commercialism reached new heights in America. Lescaze arrived at a moment when whatever was a saleable item, stylistically speaking, was a wonderful commodity to have. He fell into a situation in which a country was ready for a new style, and Lescaze did very well in this situation.

Looking at the work of Lescaze, I have the feeling that he was a very astute man. Although he had observed quite a few things, he was not able to make any kind of serious claim for an intellectual framework for his work. There is a peculiar absence of plans in all of his work. There is not one memorable plan in any of Lescaze's work. If you attach any kind of meaning to the plan then, intellectually, Lescaze does not exist.

The only thing we can seriously discuss is the PSFS building. I think the striking thing about PSFS is that it was really the only modern skyscraper built before the Second World War. I think it is a fantastic building and will remain a fantastic building.

There is another question that is bothering me, as it did Professor

Cohen, and that is: What happened to Lescaze after the Second World War? It might be compared to what would happen to the New York Cosmos soccer team if someone bought several of the great European teams and brought them to this country. Suddenly, the Cosmos, the best team in America, would find itself at the bottom of the heap. I think that was very much the case for Lescaze when Gropius and Mies arrived in this country. Although I will say that there is not one skyscraper standing in this country by Gropius that one wants to take a second look at.

In conclusion, I will repeat my thesis that underneath it all, Lescaze probably never had the kind of intellectual foundation that could stand up once people like Mies and Gropius arrived. Once they arrived, Lescaze was no longer the hero he had been once.

ROBERT STERN: I would like to record my thanks to the speakers for their very stimulating talks and to the organizers and the designer of this exhibition. Most architectural exhibitions are cloying or repellent in their installations. This exhibition is one of the few really beautiful architectural exhibitions I have seen in a long time.

Obviously, I have a long-abiding relationship of one sort or another with Lescaze as an architect and as a personality. I actually met him a number of times before and during the writing of my book on George Howe. There are, I think, a number of issues which are very important in connection with Lescaze.

The first and most important one I wish to speak about is the issue of a person's career cut off from one country and culture when he goes abroad to another country. I think we have over-romanticized Mr. Lescaze. Switzerland was very remote. While he did study at the ETH under Karl Moser, the school was not a high-flying aesthetic hotbed. It was a technical institution and Moser, as an architect, was known for a very simple, almost engineering-like approach to architecture.

The full documentation of Lescaze's career in the 1920s, which is available in the catalogue but not in the exhibition, indicates he was a complete eclectic. Whether his eclecticism was based on conviction, confusion, mere expediency, or a combination of all three is something I think none of us will ever really know.

He was well patronized in New York as an architect. The Swiss consul in New York helped him get a start. He went to a very good firm, in all fairness, in Cleveland. I think he really had no idea about his

artistic intention when he got off the boat in America, except for a vague twenty-year-old's notion of doing something great. Contrast that, for example, with the fact that five years later, Moser's son Werner Moser came here and went straight to Frank Lloyd Wright. That's where you went if you knew what you were doing at that time. That's where Schindler went, that's where Neutra went, and that's where Mendelsohn went. I don't think Lescaze knew about Frank Lloyd Wright. There is certainly no documentation of any knowledge at that time.

I do think Lescaze aggrandized his position enormously. He was certainly quick. On the other hand, he was part of another tradition in New York architecture. In those years, there were many German and Austrian in particular, with some French, architect-decorators. It is an aspect of the interest in Total Design which Arthur Pulos discussed. There were many people in New York, all foreign-born and growing out of a craft tradition, who were architect-decorators. Lescaze was definitely part of that tradition.

Paul Frankl was trained as an architect in Germany. He came to practise in America. Frank Lloyd Wright wrote a few words of introduction to Frankl's 1928 book *New Directions*. Frankl published Wright's work at a point when Wright's career was at its nadir. The leading figure of that group in terms of his relationship to architecture and creative practice was Joseph Urban. He came here first in 1904 to install the display of Viennese furniture at the St. Louis World's Fair. He came back to design sets for the Metropolitan Opera and was more or less stranded here by the outbreak of the First World War. Lescaze was part of that group but he was absolutely the most marginal figure in that group.

Carol Willis opens the window on this whole period in her talk. If you look at what Lescaze was doing in those years, it was all nickel and dime stuff in terms of the size of the projects and their intellectual content. It was the great commercial architects, Hood, Kahn, and Walker—the so-called Little Napoleons of New York architecture—who really understood the American experience, who really understood the iconic power of the skyscraper as a corporate symbol. It was that power that was behind the Chicago Tribune competition in 1922. Europeans like Duiker or Gropius, who had never been to America, misinterpreted the competition while Loos, who had been to America, understood the nature of the American Skyscraper as a symbol and

as an advertisement.

Sometime during the 1920s and, I think, by virtue of his experience with George Howe on the PSFS building, Lescaze began to paint a picture for himself of what he might become as an architect. I believe, with Dean Seligmann, that the exhibition reveals interesting work for which we have a certain nostalgia. But it is very unimportant work in terms of carving a new vision of something. That is not to say that every architect must create a new vision. Many architects work within a given framework. But if you work within a framework, you don't work alone. This is one of the keys to understanding the success and failure of Lescaze's career. Lescaze not only did not arrive here in 1938 with an established philosophy like Gropius, Breuer, and Mies did, he did not associate himself with a university or other institution that might have sustained his growth as an artist through discourse. He was disassociated from the milieu of the so-called café society. He hustled to get jobs. I noticed Mr. Paley did not entertain Mr. Lescaze at his house, only the other way around. That means Lescaze was having parties and inviting potential clients to his townhouse.

I think the problem of isolation became critical for Lescaze after World War II with Mies sitting in Chicago and Gropius sitting in Cambridge, each attracting the best and most innovative talents to their schools and offices. Lescaze was a man without a constituency and without a clue why.

Not only should Lescaze's early career be placed in the milieu of the Frankls and the Hoods of the 1920s, but his middle career, when he was at his best, should be placed in a milieu also. As a growing modernist in the 1930s, his career paralleled the rising career of Edward Durrell Stone. Stone was trained at MIT, worked on the Radio City complex, then went out on his own. He absorbed lessons from Frank Lloyd Wright on the one hand and from European modernism on the other. He produced buildings such as the original Museum of Modern Art in New York and a succession of houses which really do define a kind of American modernism.

If we move on into the 1950s, when Lescaze fell apart, I think it is interesting to note who did get the CBS commissions for example. CBS didn't go to Mies or Gropius or Frank Lloyd Wright. CBS went first to Pereira and Luckman who did Television City in Los Angeles. Luckman had been a vice-president of Lever Brothers. He then became an architect. He understood the corporate situation perfectly. CBS

commissioned Eero Saarinen to do the corporate headquarters in New York. Saarinen is really the legitimate psychological inheritor of the spirit of Hood, Walker, and Kahn.

In conclusion, I have found this symposium an extremely valuable occasion because it has reminded me of the milieu and the goals of the architects of that era. It also reminded me of the role in architecture of the people who worked in the office with the designer. They are people we must not forget. Howe and Lescaze put together a group of talented people in the Philadelphia and New York offices—there were two offices in those critical years. Howe understood how to deal with the clients. He understood the first rule of architecture, "Get the job". He got the job and he understood how to keep the job. Beyond that, there were younger men in the offices, Walter Baermann, George Daubs, Alfred Clauss, who understood how to put the building together. I am not referring here to nuts and bolts, to the structural stuff, but rather, how to make the conception of the PSFS building come alive in astonishing detail. The irony of the whole thing is that if you examine the *curriculum vitae* of each member of that team, none of them had it all together. But for one certain moment, in one certain place, this group of people came together and put together this remarkable icon of American architecture. We must never forget that, at least in America, the making of the greatest building is frequently the direct product of an assemblage of talents in what we call an office. This is very different from the atelier operation of European practice or certain romantic notions of design.

DENNIS DOORDAN: Since CBS has been mentioned a couple of times in the responses this afternoon, I should add that during my research I spoke to a number of present and former officials at CBS. They attributed the end of Lescaze's relationship with CBS to two factors. One was the growing size and sophistication of CBS's own in-house design staff. As the design department grew in size, it took on an increasing amount of work that previously had been commissioned out to Lescaze. The other factor was the decision in the early 1950s to build Television City in Los Angeles. That was a major project with a twenty-five-acre site and a multi-million-dollar budget. CBS was concerned about the size of Lescaze's office and its location in New York City. They wanted a larger office located in the project area for Television City. When I asked about Pereira and Luckman, people at CBS spoke

more of Luckman than Pereira. As a former assistant to Paul Kesten put it, "We had a confidence in our ability to communicate with Mr. Luckman. He spoke our language and because he also spoke an architect's language, he could translate, supposedly, our desires to Pereira." There was a concern about communication and CBS felt confident, because of Luckman's business background, dealing with Pereira and Luckman.

CAROL WILLIS: I have had my say already today so I will keep my comments brief. I want to make one observation about the remarks, including Professor Pulos' lecture last night. The remarks seem to be divided. On one hand, the traditionalists, who now represent (paradoxically) orthodox embattled modernism, have maintained a fairly hardline attitude towards what Lescaze's contribution was. On the other hand, there are those who are more skeptical of the modernist point of view and evaluate Lescaze's contribution with more perspective.

As for the exhibition, I think it is beautiful. I think if people read the subtitle of the exhibition, "The Rise of Modern Design in America", and think of it as a show about design in the 1930s and 1940s rather than as a show about Lescaze, it is enormously successful in giving insight into this period.

ROBERT DEAN: I have some general reactions to what has been said so far. First, I don't think Lescaze ever really did understand his role. I think he understood that he had a goal, but it wasn't an architectural goal in the manner of the German modernists. It was a Swiss goal, one very much influenced by a sense of craft. It did not proclaim the whole socialist-cubist modernism position. But Lescaze knew that somehow he was supposed to come into contact with this modernist vision. He knew that was what was "happening" and he was trying desperately to figure out how to come into contact with it. At the same time, he knew, respected, and, I think, almost deified people like Paley and he wanted to come into contact with them.

I think if he really understood his role in all its complexity, he would have ended up operating a firm like Skidmore, Owings and Merrill or Pereira and Luckman. He would not have had an atelier in his house and come down in his bathrobe, as Bill Scarbrough remembers. [Editor's note: William Scarbrough teaches in the Syracuse University School of Architecture and worked for Lescaze in the 1950s.] Lescaze would

have been the dynamic, business-like creator he tried to describe in his autobiography. His artistic output during his first decade in this country was definitely eclectic. The eclecticism represents, for me, Lescaze's search for a way to come into contact with two very different things, the avant-garde art trends of the period and the commercial art reality he saw in the skyscraper designers in New York. The important thing about Lescaze for me is that search for a connection. He attempted to bridge those two worlds. He was not the only person in this country that tried to bridge those two worlds, but his significance certainly rides on that attempt.

LINDSAY SHAPIRO: I agree with Werner Seligmann that Lescaze did not have a strong intellectual framework. One can't really find any decent plans in his work. After his experience at the ETH in Zürich, he was primarily self-taught. He made a few trips to Europe and looked through the latest periodicals.

I would like to say one thing about the PSFS building. Howe sought out Lescaze to be his partner in the design of this project. Howe was searching for a sense of modernism and felt he could not do it on his own. The contract between Howe and Lescaze specified that Lescaze was the designer for the project and Howe was responsible for client relations and business management.

ROBERT STERN: I am sure that's true in general, but it is a matter of degree as well. Also, we have this romantic notion of the design of the PSFS building—Lescaze's famous Christmas sketch dedicated to his wife, for example. But before Howe called Lescaze, there were schemes done by Howe that included the plan idea with the separated tower and slab. Also, you must remember that Lescaze insisted to the last possible moment that the columns be kept inside the building. This would have made it the biggest marshmallow sandwich of all time.

ROBERT DEAN: For me, the key to the PSFS building is not the question of who was the big honcho in charge of designing the building. A project of that size is not an individual effort. The key is the fact that George Howe, who was an infinitely sophisticated person, sought out the best designer he could find to apply the proper imagery to this gigantic commission. Later, after he and Lescaze found their partnership to be intolerable, Howe sought others to fill that role. But in 1929,

the person he sought was William Lescaze. What that indicates is that Lescaze, who, as Lindsay Shapiro pointed out, was basically self-taught over the course of a decade, had developed a sensitivity to something that was recognizable. Neither Lescaze nor anyone else ever really tried to explain what that something was until the 1960s, but Lescaze had somehow put "something" together.

DENNIS DOORDAN: One comment I would like to make concerns Lescaze's decision to come to America. Lescaze told an anecdote about a discussion he once had with Karl Moser while still a student at the ETH. According to Lescaze, Moser said to him, "Where are you ever going to find the chance of doing monumental work? Egypt? It's too late; maybe in America." That is the European version of "Go west, young man." And that's what Lescaze did. He did not come to this country to sit at the feet of Frank Lloyd Wright or join a particular architectural cult; he came to build. He did not go to Taliesin or to California; he went to the center of corporate America, New York City.

STUART COHEN: I come to this panel in something of an awkward position, as I am not particularly knowledgeable about the career of William Lescaze. I am, therefore, an impartial judge, willing to accept Lescaze at face value, based upon the buildings themselves. I am convinced that Lescaze could not have done the PSFS building by himself. It must have been a collaboration. He may have been the person who pulled it all together, who lent the design process a unifying vision. But none of the architecture that preceded it nor the architecture that followed it has any of the sense of detail and finesee that is exhibited so extravagantly in the PSFS building.

How can you look at Lescaze's houses, for example, on any level of detail? In many of them you get a favorite detail of Lescaze's, where he will take one of the planes and pull it out away from the building, in a De Stijl or Neo-Plastic manner. He stands the plane on a column, but then he wraps a strip window around the corner. The notion of dissolving the house into a series of articulated planes and the volumetric idea of rounding a corner are simply put together as if Lescaze pulled them out of a bag of tricks. The control of those aspects of making architecture is, for me, what constitutes detail. There doesn't seem to be much evidence of that kind of control, either visually or intellectually, in any of the work except the PSFS building.

ROBERT DEAN: I think the key to understanding Lescaze is *not* in seeing clumsy detail because there are also extremely elegant details. The level of detail depended on the budget and on the client; the details were negotiable. I would like to respond to what Stuart Cohen and Robert Stern said earlier by referring to Eero Saarinen. I think Saarinen and Lescaze can be compared in a productive way. Saarinen is the person who finally put together the concept of American commercial architecture. Lescaze was struggling desperately throughout his career to figure out that concept. At the high point of his career, he understood what the product was supposed to be, but he never understood what the organization or the productive structure for that product was supposed to be. Saarinen finally figured that out and he took over from people like Lescaze. The atelier gave way to the corporate firm. So I see Lescaze as the product prefigured, not finished.

ROBERT STERN: I think that is very interesting, but I disagree with you. Saarinen wasn't the first to do it. Raymond Hood and those characters had done it brilliantly for their generation and Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim had done it for their generation.

ROBERT DEAN: But they weren't burdened with the task of presenting Modern Architecture at the same time.

ROBERT STERN: Saarinen is a fascinating character. While he did not quite have a bathrobe atelier, it was almost that. It was a very small office. Saarinen farmed out the working drawings, in the tradition of Hood, Walker, and Kahn. On a corporate level, however, Saarinen was able to convey the idea that he was the master of an armada of technicians.

STUART COHEN: We have been looking at the relationship of Modern Architecture to commercial architecture and I think there are a few things we have failed to acknowledge. One thing is the fact that commercial buildings rarely have wonderful plans. More importantly, the relationship between Modern Architecture and business and commercial concerns changed after the Second World War. In Europe, before the war, Modern Architecture was a style associated with social revolution. In America, it was a novelty associated with commerce at the most immediate levels—shops, for example—and as a novelty, Modern

Architecture had a commercial and advertising value.

After the war, we are looking at a far different situation. Modern Architecture is sold as a style representative of power, stability, and corporate identity. There is really a transformation of Modern Architecture here with the arrival of Mies, Gropius, and the rest of the Europeans.

DENNIS DOORDAN: In connection with that phenomenon I want to point out that in the 1950s there was an increasing number of homegrown American modernists. It was not just the arrival of the European figures that was decisive. Large American architectural firms—such as Skidmore, Owings and Merrill or Pereira and Luckman—combined an ability to produce the "look" with a smart, savvy commercial approach to practice.

I see we are running out of time. I would like to thank all of the participants.

William Lescaze Reconsidered

BY WILLIAM H. JORDY

Looking back on it from our present perspective, what can one say of Lescaze's career? History has been cruel to it. Although the skyscraper for the Philadelphia Saving Fund Society, designed with George Howe (in a design relationship which is still debated) shared in the grand sweep of history, there is not much else now to point to. Of course, to be widely known for a single achievement of such importance in a career may be fame enough. A creativity which is sustained throughout a long professional life and which continuously demands the historian's attention is rare. To have had a Woolworth Building, a Lincoln Memorial, a Schroeder house, a PSFS—just one moment of supreme glory, which even history in the large must acknowledge—is more fame than all but very few will get.

History, however, offers not only the panoramic vista, but also the closer look. It is the closer look which we take of Lescaze here: specifically, his role in "the rise of modern design in America", to cite the theme of this exhibition. But even a careful scrutiny has its disappointing (one might even say for Lescaze personally, its cruel) aspect. The decade that remains important in his professional career comes relatively early, from roughly 1929 to 1939, or from his thirty-third to his forty-third year. The decade of professional life which preceded was desultory and uncertain preparation. The three decades which remained to him from the outbreak of World War II, when he at last began to get commissions of something like the scale of PSFS, are, if thoroughly respectable, dull at best. The magic moment had somehow passed, and, among early modern architects in the United States, not just for Lescaze.

For him, even the restricted look at the single most creative decade of his career can seem disappointing (and harsh) at first sight. It began with the building that rocketed him to fame. The depression saw that no such sizeable opportunities would come his way soon again. Lescaze's other buildings during the thirties were small to medium in scale. PSFS was, so to speak, his Price Tower looming (at the time Wright designed it, at least) over a Bartlesville of smaller buildings. To take a close historical look at Lescaze's career as a modernist demands that we temporarily set PSFS aside, except as a point of comparison—and anyway

I have had my say on this[1]—in order to concentrate on the smaller buildings.

What is the configuration of Lescaze's career as a modern architect? It is not, I think, one that requires chronological treatment, because it does not show consistent development: not one, in other words, that indicates the progressive working out of an individual point of view. It is, indeed, a pragmatic career. On the whole, Lescaze accepted a received "look" from European modernism; but he countered this (and here is the real interest in his career) by rising to special occasions which demanded both insight and enthusiasm.[2]

The received look appears, above all, in the series of houses for suburban or country sites which he designed during the thirties. The special occasions occur in such diverse commissions—some examined by other contributors—as his schemes for the Museum of Modern Art, his housing (especially the Chrystie-Forsyth Street Housing Development), his work as architect and designer for the Columbia Broadcasting System, and in my opinion, above all in his three townhouses in Manhattan. These, together with some of his industrial design and PSFS, comprise his principal legacy to the modern movement. Let us look at them.

How eagerly he received, absorbed, and perpetuated the look of European modernism is demonstrated by his designs for a house for the year 2039, designs which he produced at the time of the New York World's Fair, hoping perhaps, but if so, in vain, that they might win him a job for something similar at the Fair itself (fig. 1). Surely, this House of the Future so-called was all too much his House of the Present. In the airbrushed ethereality of one of its presentation drawings, it seems to be fabricated of aluminum (or some other thin and gleaming material as yet undiscovered) and appears the more fragile for all the extravagance of its plate glass infill. So much is this the case that it is difficult to tell who, among this mob of guests invited to a presumed house-warming (or perhaps visitors to the Fair), is within the house and who without. The pipe-railed decks and stairs appear as his hallmark of the future. The topmost deck has been reinforced to take helicopters, one of which occurs in the drawing as a blob behind the

1. William H. Jordy, "PSFS: Its Development and Its Significance in Modern Architecture", *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 21 (May 1962): 47-102.

2. For general background on Lescaze's career, I am indebted to the catalogue sponsored by the Institute of Architecture and Urban Studies, Lindsay Stamm Shapiro, ed., *William Lescaze* (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, 1982).

tree. Guests arrive from the sky as well as from the street. Another, less diaphanous drawing reveals this future in more pedestrian clarity (fig. 2). In its design the helicopter has advanced little more than the architecture. (As imaginative projections of what then existed, Frank Lloyd Wright's spinning tops over Broadacres are far more visionary than Lescaze's stodgy vehicle.) Nor have cars apparently advanced much, although the airbrushed version does indicate something dimly Dymaxion. Somehow, the suburban developer's plot, with its hedge and scattered tufts of yews on the front lawn, epitomizes (perhaps all too exactly) the degree of change that is expected to occur. The clearer

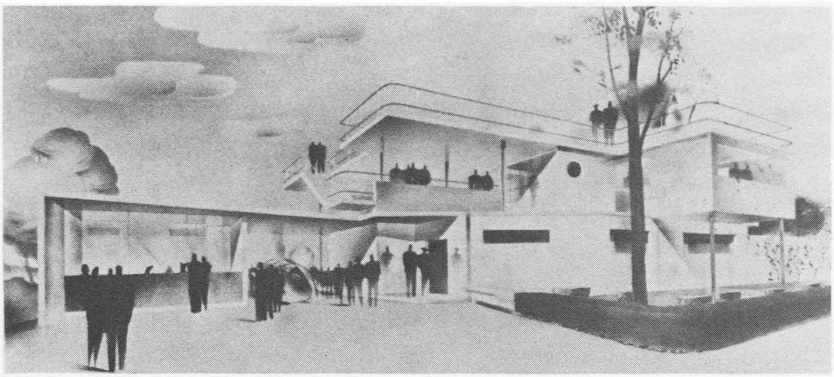


Fig. 1. Project for a House for the Year 2039, 1939, Rendering.
(This and all other illustrations for this article are from the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections at Syracuse University.)

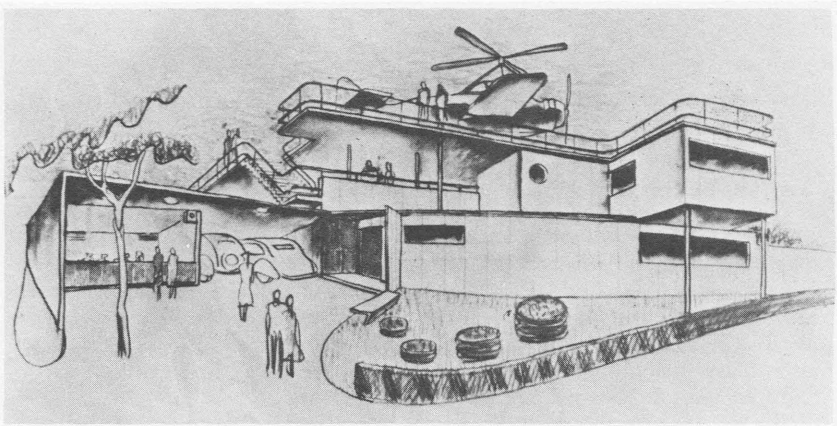


Fig. 2. Project for a House for the Year 2039, 1939, Rendering.

of the two views does at least foretell one aspect of the future. Over the garage door, to one side, there appears to be an electric eye or an alarm of some sort. Nothing, however, redeems the lack of imagination displayed in this project. Given the problem of designing a house projected a hundred years into the future, Lescaze came up with a century of provincial International Style, tarted up with vehicles and gadgetry which could have been extrapolated from the advertising pages of *Collier's* or the *Saturday Evening Post.*

To be more modern than "modern", at a time when modern had just been established as (in Mies' phrase) the style of the epoch, was, at least, consistent. But in examining *en bloc* the suburban and country houses of Lescaze's creative decade, can more be said for them? Consider his Frederick Vanderbilt Field house in New Hartford, Connecticut, which was built in 1930-31 (fig. 3). It has been called the "first *country* house built in the United States in the International Style of architecture",[3] following three slightly earlier residential designs, none of which were realized. As grandson of Marshall Field and great-grandson of Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, his client could well afford the isolated mountain site of nearly eight acres with a spectacular view. But Field, then in his twenties, was something of a renegade millionaire—a writer with liberal socialist views who specialized in modern China.[4] Sun Terrace (as this house was called) was intended as a summer hideaway. According to Field's own instructions to his architect, it was to be "intelligent about service, sun and air, and with space for 2,000 reference books".[5] So, it was to be a combined locus for reclusive relaxation and study. Only the year before Lescaze began his design, in the perpetual summer of Los Angeles Richard Neutra had completed the first (and greatest) American house in the so-called International Style for Philip Lovell (1927-29).[6] (Although surrounded mostly by desert hills at the time it was built, it was located in a *city*; hence the need to specify the Field House as the "first" American

3. According to information on the house in the National Register of Historic Places, United States Department of Interior.

4. Field's many publications on modern China, especially on economic issues in the Far East, were for the most part issued by the Institute of Pacific Relations. He also published *Thoughts on the Meaning and Use of Pre-Hispanic Sellos* (Washington: Dumbarton Oaks, 1967), as a product of his long-time residence in Mexico.

5. Information in National Register of Historic Places.

6. The best account appears in Thomas S. Hines, *Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 75-91.

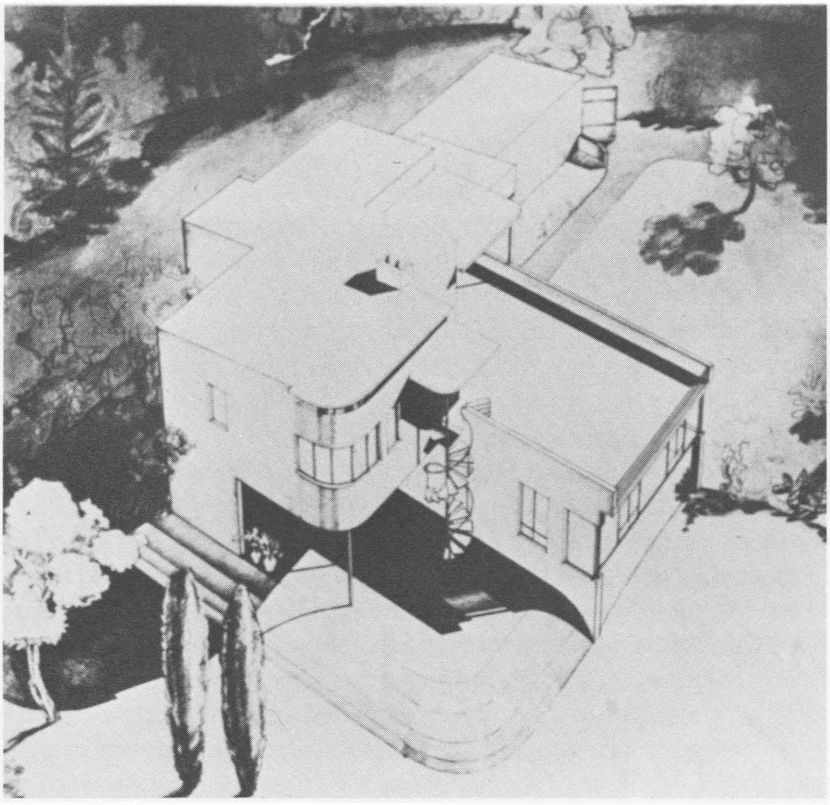


Fig. 3. Frederick Vanderbilt Field House, New Hartford, Connecticut, 1930-31, Howe & Lescaze, Rendering.

country house in the International Style, if it was to have any premier designation.) Lovell was an advocate for advanced ideas on diet, exercise, and health, which he publicized (along with his Health House) in his regular "Care of the Body" column in the *Los Angeles Times*. Lovell, like Field, typified the progressive-minded client who, together with independent-minded, small, but prosperous businessmen, were the principal clients for early modern houses.

The Field House is obviously an example of the International Style which would, at the very time of its completion, be christened as such in the pioneer exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art. There are, to be sure, personal palettes within the Style. What a difference there is, in fact, between the Lovell and Field houses! Neutra consistently evolved his house from the frame, with walls hung mostly as horizon-

tal ribbons from it. Lescaze was obviously eclectic, mixing purist and constructivist strains of modernism and for the principal elevation setting the curved container for the master bedroom in a collisive and diagonal manner against the box for the living space. In the isometric drawing we see other typical Lescaze emphases. The house appears as a compact cluster of interlocked boxes, piled up toward the core of an eccentric pinwheel, which the isometric drawing accentuates. The crisply edged building is thrust in several directions toward the ghosted landscape by a draftsman who (as the cliche has it) had "trouble with trees" and covered his deficiency by spotty additive bits of frumpy scribble and wash. But it is the precise isometric that counts, with its extension into some terracing of adjacent lawns, before the geometry is lost to the American wild.

The most conspicuous mannerism in Lescaze's residential design is the curved volume, so overwhelmingly present at the base of PSFS, born in a drawing by Lescaze done on Christmas day in 1928.[7] This curved volume is often in Lescaze's houses, as here, ponderously floated over a shadowed void, as though the geometry of the house resisted to the utmost the eroding force of the surrounding openness. Ground living balances deck living in this house. One or more inset columns lift the curved form over the void. These pipe stem props appear elsewhere in the Field house. Two serve as flanking supports to mark the outermost limits of the living room volume thrust out toward the major view. The pipe columns here seem squeezed at the top and bottom, the more so because the flanking walls above and below project slightly beyond the enclosed box of space like the jaws of a vise. Above, an equally quirky notching occurs where the roof terrace projects as a ledge or mini-cantilevering. As an early publication of the house informs us,[8] this projection is intended to throw water drained from the terrace out from the wall below—a practical detail designed to cope with the freezing which would occur if the roof drained through an interior pipe in a house mostly closed for the winter. However, the fact that it looks and acts like a conventionally projected eaves is enough to disturb the abstract "purity" of the geometry. Yet another pipe support props a corner of the slab which protects a nook at the opposite end of the roof terrace. Most conspicuously of all, one more pipe rises

7. Jordy, "PSFS: Its Development", 63.
8. *Architectural Record* 72 (November 1932): 329.

from the ground a full two stories, supporting the wind of the circular stairs before terminating as the prop of another sheltering roof slab over a bit of the roof terrace.[9] Surely nothing about this lackadaisical scatter of pipe supports and their varied uses suggests the European philosophical dialectic for Modern Architecture, in which the field of regularly placed, widely spaced point supports in skeletal framing visually opposes the open volumes of interior space made possible by this skeletal structural system. Lescaze uses his columns as casual functional props with the pragmatic attitude of one who had absorbed the look of modernism more than its message.

Indeed, a glance at the very practical plan (fig. 4) of this summer hideaway makes clear that, a certain openness notwithstanding, the

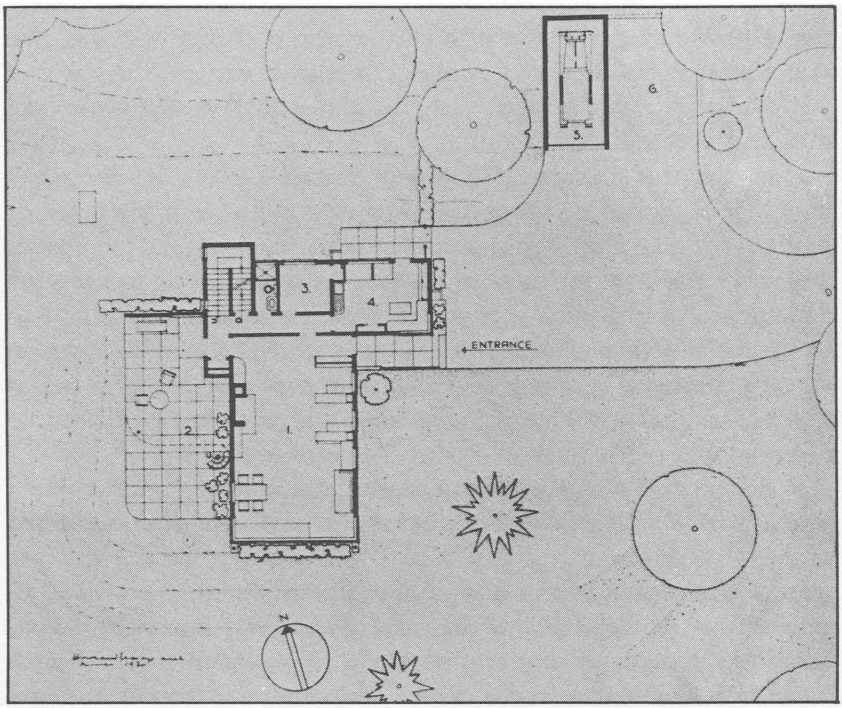


Fig. 4. Frederick Vanderbilt Field House, New Hartford, Connecticut, 1930-31, Howe & Lescaze, Plan.

9. This occurs only in the isometric. As executed, the pipe for the circular stair is stabilized by right-angled supports into the wall of the house and the overhead slab receives its own pipe support from the roof parapet.

spaces are conceived in the traditional manner as a series of boxes making their impress on the exterior massing: a box for the big living space; a box behind for the service area making an "L" of the first floor; a box for the stair; two boxes for the bedrooms above, with a box for the bath between, making a stepped diagonal of the upstairs massing where it opens onto the rooftop terrace. Inside, all is walls—no columns at all—thus confirming the conservative use of the pipe supports on the exterior as bits plucked from the rhetorical and philosophical ensemble for what Modern Architecture should be. These bits do not serve to demonstrate the logic which called forth this kind of Modern Architecture in the first place, but appear as scattered emblems of the "modernism" the house was meant to invoke. In short, measured against the highest plane of the European rationale for modernism, the Field house is provincial. A few years ago that is where the verdict might have rested. And so it might rest today. Now, however, one is almost tempted to view Lescaze's pilfering of parts in the terms of postmodernist wit and irony, using the modernist flotsam as commentary and parody.

But surely this is a superficial view of Lescaze's design, however productive it might be for a postmodernist revival of his work. For a devout modernist of the thirties like Lescaze, modernism was far too serious and too immediate for such levity. It is more rewarding to view the Field house afresh, without condescension, for what it was and is and to inquire whether it might have virtues worth more consideration than the nostalgic cuteness of so much current design which pretends to profound historical insight. The virtues it proclaims might indeed be construed as an admonition to the present.

The first of these virtues is its austerity and simplicity, in tune with a vision which then existed of modern life and which the asperities of the depression reinforced. (Think what would be the likely consequence of such largesse in Long Island's Southampton today!) Consider again the directness of the plan of the Field house, its decent restraint. Observe the importance of the living room and its hearth downstairs, opening to the sheltered terrace on the ground; the easy connection between ground and roof terrace; the straightforward convenience of the staggered bedrooms with the centered bath. Or, looking again at the photograph of the house with Field himself on the deck with a friend (fig. 5), consider the implications of the bluntness with which the windowed boxiness is set against the looming bulk of

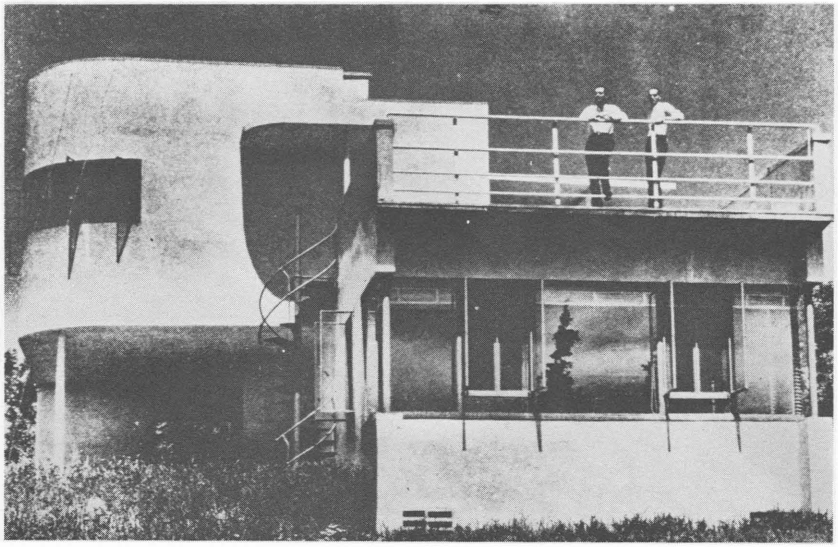


Fig. 5. Frederick Vanderbilt Field House, New Hartford, Connecticut, 1930-31, Howe & Lescaze, Exterior view.

the master bedroom with its curve of casement windows commanding the view, like the cabin of the ship this partly means to be. It is an awkward conjunction—comparable, in the collision of curved volume to rectangular volume, to Lescaze's earlier scheme for the Oak Lane Country Day School, constructed in 1929 (fig. 6), only one classroom and the centerpiece of which was built. But what is admirable is precisely this directness to the expression of what is most essential to the program.

What about awkwardnesses in detail? Awkwardness is admittedly evident. For example, there is the placement of the curved window dead center in the surface of its wall where Le Corbusier, for instance, would characteristically have increased the visual tension and assertiveness of the volume by forcing it a little down as he did in his Savoye house. There are those unintended lapses between traditional and modern expression, like the aforementioned eaves—or, elsewhere, the occasional appearance of a piece of projecting cornice ledge to contrast with the sheer edges of modernist *prisms purs*; and, of course, there is the boxiness of the spaces inside. Are we to read the area above the living room window band as part of the volume or as a spanning beam between supports? The confusion is dismaying. But to return to those pipe supports: in their scatter, their varied heights, their

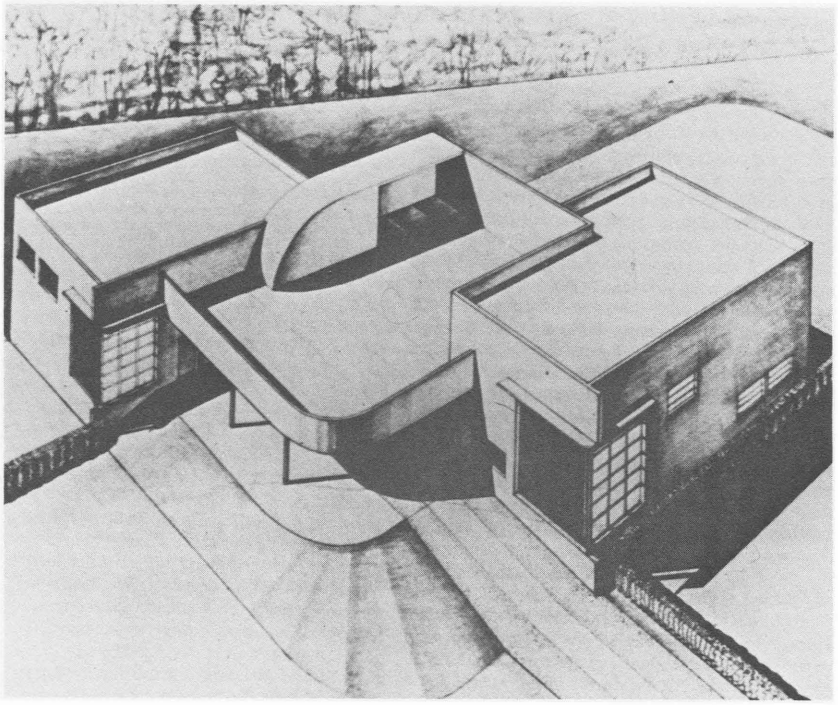


Fig. 6. Oak Lane Country Day School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1929, Howe & Lescaze, Rendering.

toothpick lack of presence, their prosaic and localized functions, don't they revert to the vernacular and appear as the lally columns they really are? But it is just this ambivalent hold on what is commonplace, while reaching for what is cosmopolitan, which (in a more consciously intended design) might give the Field house special interest today.

Among Lescaze's other houses there are finer, more consistent designs, like the William Curry house (High Cross as it was called), which served the headmaster at the Dartington Hall School in Devon, England, and which was built in 1930-32 (fig. 7). It was another progressive school, like Oak Lane and the Hessian Hill School in Croton-on-Hudson, New York (1931-32), which Lescaze also designed at this time. The liberal forces for progressive education, so pervasive and persuasive during the thirties, called forth such schools in the United States as images for the "experimentation" and "modernity" promised in the curriculum. Curry, who had been headmaster of the Oak Lane venture in nursery education, was called to Dartington Hall to head an

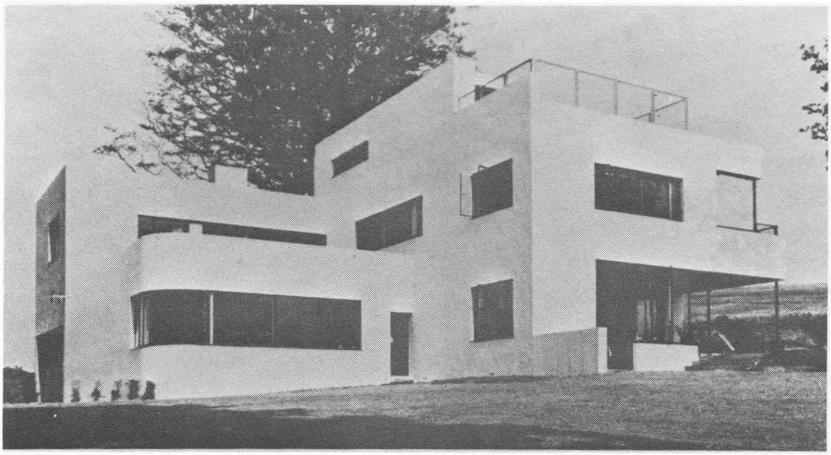


Fig. 7. William Curry House (High Cross), Dartington Hall,
Devon, England, 1930-32,
Howe & Lescaze, Exterior view.

even more radical school at the junior high school level.[10] In the Curry house the eroded void, with its lally column supports and complicated play of planes, crumbles the corner of the *prism pur* into a kind of preordained ruin which nature penetrates (dimly anticipating perhaps the sort of effect which Richard Meier and others will eke from the International Style by the late 1960s). On the same site we see how Lescaze could give the relative blandness of wall plan and consistently shaped openings in the Curry house more variety, with greater tensions among them. One can note this, for example, in one of the Dartington Hall staff cottages, which was built in 1934-35 for Kurt Jooss (fig. 8), where the shape of the tall slot and its adjacent blip are tensely set against cornered rectangular windows in the manner, say, of Gropius' faculty houses at the Bauhaus or some of the De Stijl houses in the Netherlands. We see yet another Lescaze design approach in an all-glass alternative for a rather grand project for the Maurice Wertheim house which was to have been built in Cos Cob, Connecticut (1931), and which would have accommodated a collection of modern

10. William B. Curry's ideas on education appear in his influential *Education in a Changing World* (New York: W. W. Norton, c.1935), variantly appearing as *Education for Sanity* (London: W. Heinemann, 1947). He also published *The Case for Federal Union* (Harmondsworth and New York: Penguin Books, 1939). His own account of Dartington Hall is incorporated in Victor Bonham-Carter, *Dartington Hall: The History of an Experiment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958).

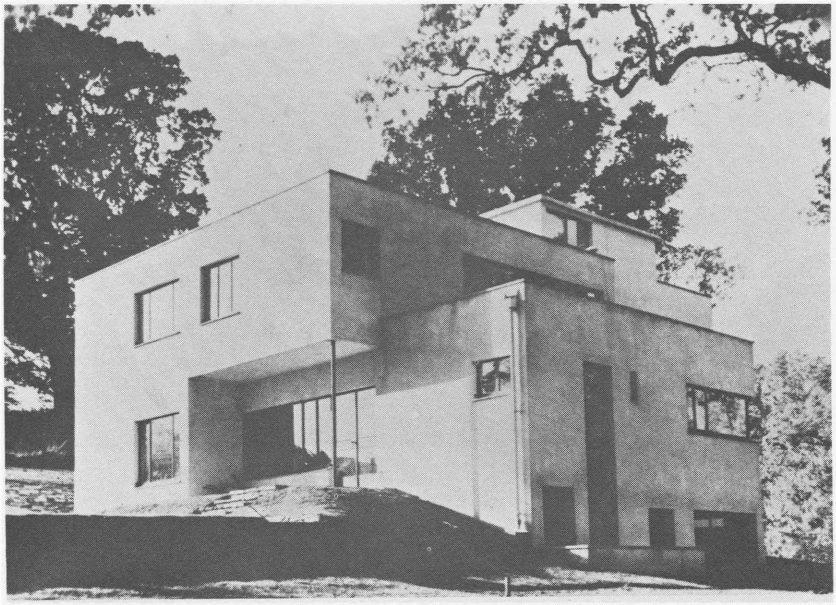


Fig. 8. Kurt Jooss House, Dartington Hall, Devon, England, 1934-35, William Lescaze, Exterior view.

art[11] (fig. 9). Lescaze never again employed such an extravagant run of plate glass windows in his residential work. Such extensive glazing, while congenial to the openness of American space for suburban houses, is rare for the tighter sites of their European equivalents. Here, the glazed ribbon at the ground is again cornered by another of those cumbrous, curved volumes on lally columns, this time climaxed by the master bedroom as pilot house on top. More interesting, especially to the retrospective viewer aware of comparable concerns in the 1970s, is the way in which stilted International Style volumes are simply butted into one another as they step down the hillside for the Roy Spreter studio and garage in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, which was built in 1933-34 (fig. 10). The masonry garage ploughs into the stucco box with the compositional nicety of an automobile accident. One feels that Lescaze is not quite aware of the full potential that these collisions might have for design, beyond the playfulness they permit between functionalism

11. On the Wertheim Collection, see Museum of Art, Raleigh, North Carolina, *Modern French Art, Monet to Picasso, the Maurice Wertheim Collection*, an exhibition held June 17-Sept. 4, 1960.

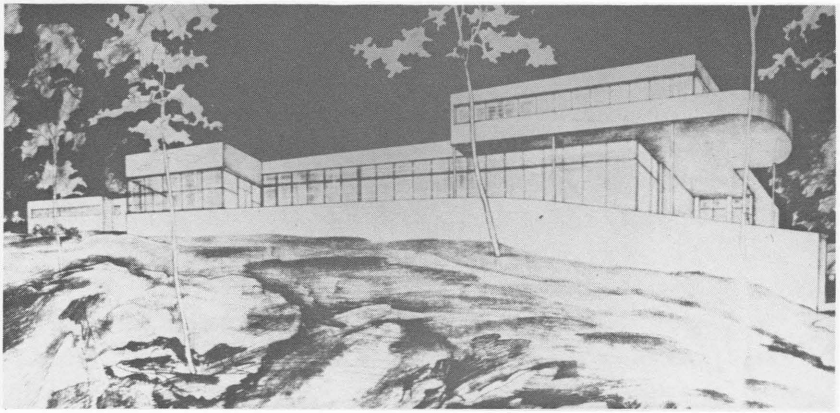


Fig. 9. Project for Maurice Wertheim House, Cos Cob, Connecticut, 1931, Howe & Lescaze, Rendering.

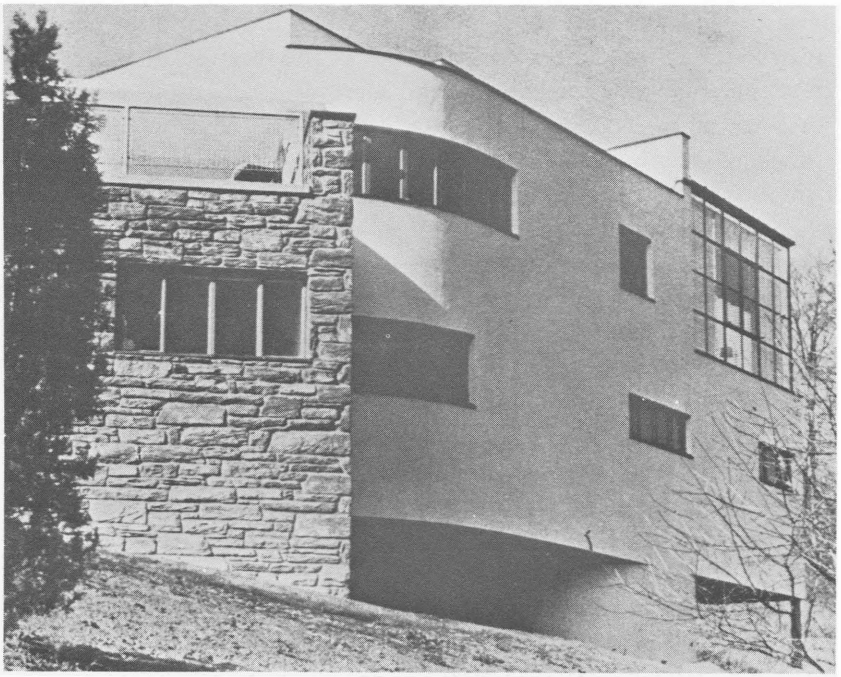


Fig. 10. Roy Spreter Studio and Garage, Ardmore, Pennsylvania, 1933-34, William Lescaze, Exterior view.

and picturesque massing. He did not develop this approach. (But one feels that today Gehry or Graves, as two examples, would understand such a potential.) Finally, to conclude this sweep of Lescaze's residential design during the thirties, I would mention that naturalistic texture and two-tone horizontality in massing become prevalent in work done toward the end of the thirties. Like other American modernists, as the decade advanced Lescaze bowed somewhat to the growing reputation of Frank Lloyd Wright.

What this series of residential design reveals, then, is a traverse of the visual effects of the International Style which is perhaps to be expected of one, like Lescaze, who receives a cosmopolitan style second-hand. The varied visual modes of the style are spread out to view in the provincial, if informed, situation where their constant adaptation to the national building habits, comforts, and to that mixture of relaxed, earnest, frank, open (and on occasion even pretentious) liberalism becomes apparent. It is precisely the kind of cultural situation which calls forth not sophisticated expression and certainly not sophisticated commentary, so much as ingenious experimentation. And that is precisely what we find in other works by Lescaze during the thirties. It is when he is roused in some way out of the received quality of the style that his work jerks us up into alertness.

Above all, of course, this energy appears in PSFS, which I have elsewhere shown to be exceptional in so many ways. Here, however, I shall only pause to observe the astonishing revelation of function evident in its massing, especially for a skyscraper office building. This characteristic is something that persists in Lescaze's work. The store on the street is boldly distinguished from the banking hall, which is in turn innovatively elevated to the second floor, as the *piano nobile* of the building, in order to preserve the commercial life of the street. This polished granite volume at the base provides a platform for the office tower, its narrow, slab-like character and off-center placement insuring perpetual light for the interior, whatever building occurs on adjacent properties. Elevators, stairs, and vertical utility shafts tend to be concentrated in the spine at the back of the building, forming a "T" with the tiers of offices. On top, a cluster of enclosures contains the executive board room and other executive amenities, as well as mechanical equipment, which is partially wrapped in a wedge-shaped enclosure with one side angled so as to present the best view of the neon letters PSFS to incoming commuters. (The original observation

platform at rooftop was subsequently rented out to a local radio and television station.)

We have already seen evidence of a similar visible packaging of functions in the Field house and in the Oak Lane School. If Oak Lane shows the school as a jointed series of individual classrooms, each discreetly revealed as a sunlit studio, Lescaze's Hessian Hills School, which included more advanced grades, arranged classrooms in a ribbon slab with factory or laboratory look, fronted by an arcade. For Dartington Hall he enlarged the Hessian Hills scheme to a loose campus arrangement of classroom blocks (which were executed in a much reduced manner). These were to have been depended from a corridor spine extending from the administration and refectory blocks at one end of the complex to the library, topped by an observatory turret, at the other. Hence, within the space of a couple of years, from 1929 through mid-1931, Lescaze explored practically all the paradigms by which progressive approaches toward school design would disintegrate the monumental school building into more informal arrangements. It is impressive evidence of Lescaze's receptivity to new ideas in such a short span of time and at such an early date.

The most exceptional demonstration of the kind of packaging of function which makes PSFS so extraordinary among skyscrapers even to this day and the progressive school projects so prophetic of future developments is the series of *tour de force* schemes which Lescaze did (while with Howe) for the Museum of Modern Art. The Museum was, in 1930-31, looking to move from the townhouse in which it had its origin to a more institutional setting. The proposed site on West Fifty-third Street, narrow and deep (sixty by one hundred feet), was to have been on axis with a proposed extension of the private street which crosses Rockefeller Center in front of the RCA and Associated Press Buildings.[12] Cut through one more block, between Fifty-first and Fifty-third Streets, the projected Museum of Modern Art (which also enjoyed strong Rockefeller backing) would have been directly linked with the Center; but John D. Rockefeller, Jr. thwarted himself in this endeavor because his own purchases of real estate drove up prices in the area to levels of expectation which made their owners unwilling

12. On the Rockefeller effort to link the Museum of Modern Art directly with Rockefeller Center, see William H. Jordy, *American Architects and Their Buildings: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), 22 ff.

to sell. Hence, nothing came of the schemes. When, in the mid-thirties, the Museum of Modern Art did build, Lescaze missed out on the job.

All variations for the proposed Museum building show the galleries clearly stacked one above the other in an effort to bring natural light deep into the narrow gallery spaces. The first version[13] seems to take off from Joseph Urban's suave New School for Social Research, which had just been completed in 1929, but with a lattice-like, glazed (or tiled) stair tower expanding against the penthouse offices at the top. The second scheme seems to have moved toward an all-glass wall in an elegant warehouse design in which the transom-like bank close to the ceiling of each floor nevertheless tended to suggest a stack of independent galleries. The perspective emphasizes the structure, pulling it out into the open, into the slotted garden between party walls at the roof. The apparent third scheme offered a stepped variant of this same glassy scheme with rooftop lighting at each stage. As this elevation with its southern exposure rose out of the shadow of the buildings across the street, roof slabs projected to shade the surface. The next stage is apparently suggesting a checkerboard of wall and glass bricks. In any case, it led to the boldest suggestion of all in two more variants dependent upon the cross stacking of top-lighted galleries, which Lescaze preferred as the definitive conclusion to the series of designs. One of these schemes shows boxed galleries partially supported by the abutting exposed columns (as Mies would later do, but as Howe and Lescaze had already done at PSFS). The other depended solely on radical cantilevering. The stacked blocks pile up to a circular restaurant on the roof. Glass blocks in a transom arrangement now extended over all exposed roof surfaces. Above each gallery, dropped interior glass ceilings made a light-diffusing box with a complicated series of baffles and louvers which were operated electrically to regulate luminosity. A complete model at one-quarter scale was built for testing.

There is about these projects for the Museum of Modern Art a decorative quality in the repetitive revelation of suave patterning, which, as clearly as any projects I know of, suggests what a thoughtful combination of waning twenties Art Deco with rising thirties Euro-

13. From a statement (located in the Lescaze Papers) made by Lescaze to the Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art, it appears that the order of the schemes is as here indicated, and not in the order in which they are illustrated (without comment) in the IAUS catalogue, above cited. Schemes 5 and 6 (as indicated here) were definitely regarded as the "final", preferred version by Lescaze.

pean modernism of an expressionist persuasion might have looked like.

Laid on the ground in a more arbitrary pattern, the design strategy of the Museum of Modern Art reappears in the *parti* of Lescaze's proposed Chrystie-Forsyth Street Housing Development, which was built in 1931-32 (fig. 11). At the time, this project, making such a clean sweep (or perhaps swipe) of the old with the new, was highly regarded. In the photo-cum-aerial perspective, the dilapidation of the existing Lower

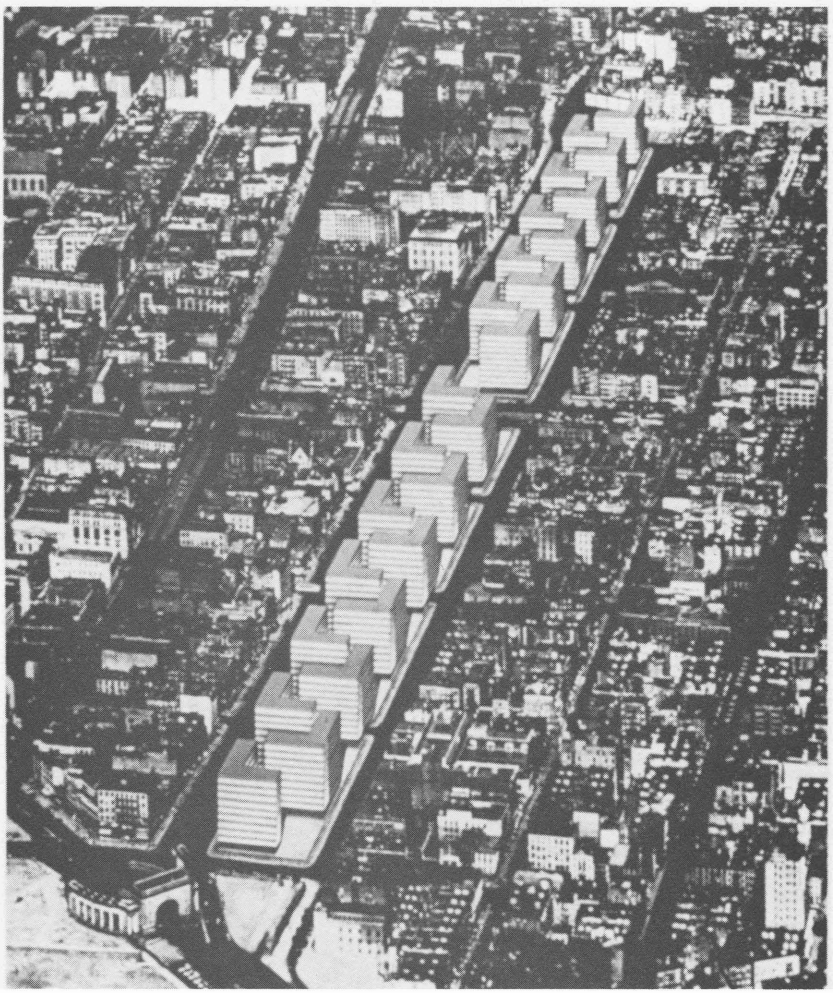


Fig. 11. Project for Chrystie-Forsyth Street Housing Development, New York, New York, 1931-33, Howe & Lescaze, Photomontage of project on the site.

East Side progressively vanishes in the remorseless advance, block by block, of the open zig-zag, like a Greek key pattern, of sharp-edged, tiered horizontals, in a manner comparable to the way in which a crisp pattern resulted from the rise of the stairs, story by story, inside PSFS. At the time of its design, several aspects of the project were both enlightened and, in combination, original: such as the way in which the pattern of the L-shaped slabs creates interior courts while the stilting of these slabs maintains continuous openness for the site; the cross ventilation of all apartments; and the open-air walkways (giving access to the individual apartments) that will much later be aggrandized as "streets in the sky". Experience with such good intentions makes us less sanguine about the project today. For its time, however, it was laudable and provided early evidence of Lescaze's continuous concern with New York's housing. Later, in the relatively low-rise Ten Eyck Houses in Brooklyn, built in 1935-38 (fig. 12), when the excessive zeal for modern expression had somewhat quieted, Lescaze participated with others to create a housing type which, in its human-scaled decency, has become belatedly acknowledged as one of the finer contributions

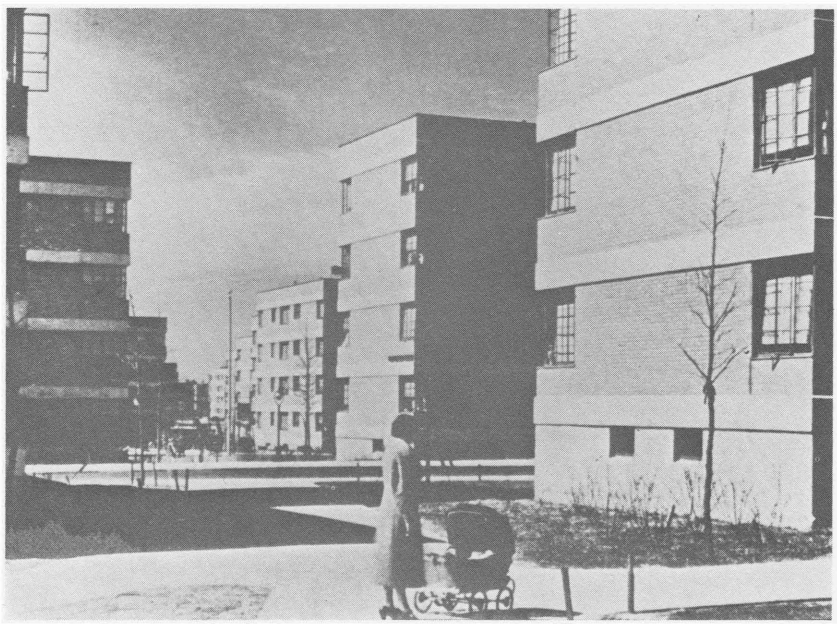


Fig. 12. Ten Eyck Houses, Brooklyn, New York, 1935-38, William Lescaze and Associated Architects, Perspective (or exterior view).

toward housing of the period. Characteristically, the more polemical statement is momentarily arresting, whereas the greater modesty of the more vernacular approach makes the more permanent appeal.

At the opposite range of urban housing, the three townhouses Lescaze did in New York between 1933 and 1941 are outstanding. To me, after PSFS, they are his most memorable designs. Especially remarkable is the first, his own house, built in 1933-34 (figs. 13 and 14). It is, at first sight, as heedless of context as the International Style mostly was. But

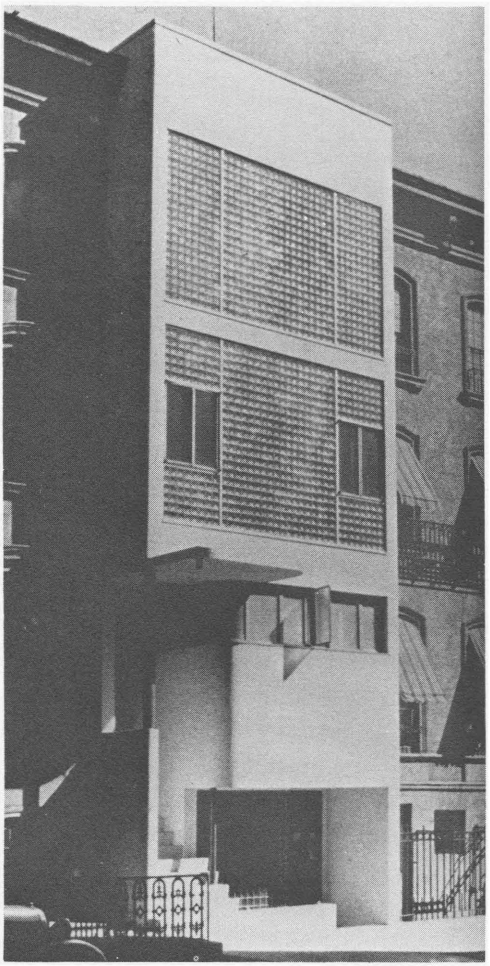


Fig. 13. William Lescaze Townhouse, New York, New York, 1933-34, William Lescaze, Facade.

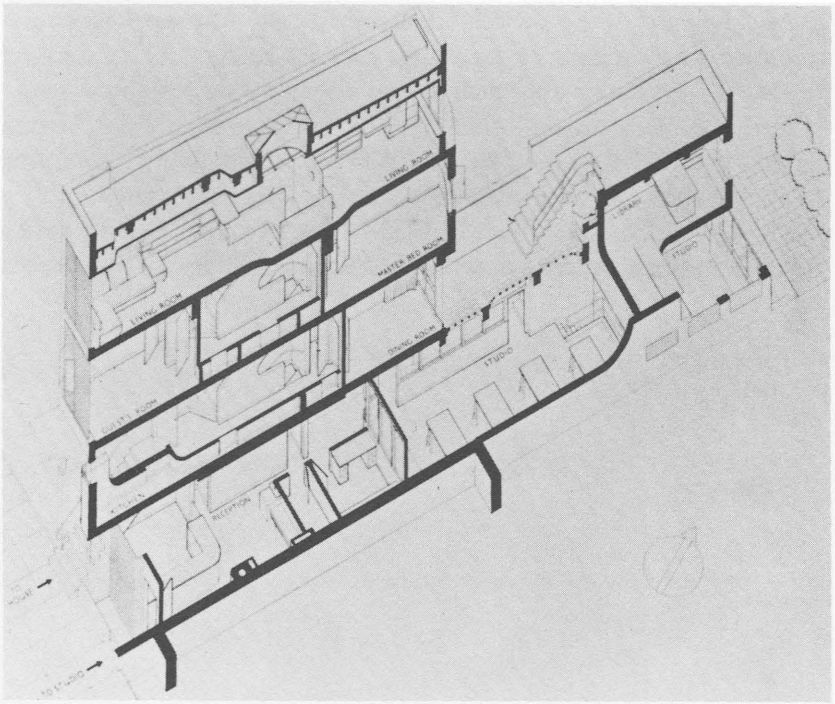


Fig. 14. William Lescaze Townhouse, New York, New York, 1933-34, William Lescaze, Axonometric-section.

after all, for such modernism at the time, the context into which it was designed to fit was part of the future that was meant to come, when *all* would be modern. Only momentarily (as it may have seemed to Lescaze) would his house impatiently burst forward of the common wall plane for the row of musty Victorian housing it interrupted. Pushing his facade out to the legal limit of sunken courts for basement service, Lescaze boldly asserted the modern *prism pur*, all luminously white (originally, but eventually gray to better cope with New York grime). It flashed with the crystalline quality of the dominating glass brick panels, at a time just before these were widely adopted in this country from Europe. But what is also part of its drama is the inset entrance to his office, back to the plane of the elevations of the Victorian neighbors. Dramatic, too, are the steps to his own living quarters above, which rise with all the steep, ceremonial stiffness of the adjacent rowhouse stairs. From their spill onto the sidewalk, up into the tall entrance slot, they rise to the residential entrance. Overhead, the

canonical Lescaze cantilevered slab with one curved corner intensifies the slot and works against the curve of the window bank sliding beneath it. Both slab and band converge from opposing directions to suck us into the entrance space. If the projecting slab heralds the entrance, it also, along with the gratuitously exposed stubby lally columns to either side of the stair, celebrates the style. Of course, the niche in which the corner column exists could have been filled as a wall. How telling that it was not! The lally column decisively stakes out the corner of the building and becomes as symbolic of modernity here as a classical column is to a Renaissance-style facade. The glass panels above accord to the height of the slightly arched windows in the Victorian elevations to either side. The stretch of wall at the top provides an equivalent to the beetling visual weight of the Victorian cornicing. So, despite the breathtaking thrust of the new here, Lescaze does acknowledge the old and saves the intrusion from becoming rambunctious.

The glass brick panels stretch a screen of light from party wall to party wall as a beacon of modernity, crystalline by day, luminous by night. Where glass brick is too often boringly blind, here windows open out as eyes, making a face of the elevation. Their verticality and that of the teeth (so to speak) of the window mouth below are stretched through the fields of glass brick, linking the levels, giving a top-batted height to the elevation and providing a center against which a sense of the interior can break through at the sides. It is a remarkably subtle elevation for such apparent simplicity and directness of means. In the elevations of his subsequent townhouses Lescaze never quite repeated its quality. The facades of both the Raymond Kramer townhouse (1934-35) and the Edward A. Norman townhouse (1940-41) are handsome, but became progressively bland.

Lescaze's own house is also remarkable within. The ground floor contains the office; the second floor, the kitchen and maid's quarters to the front, a dining room behind. This opens in the back through glazed doors to a low terrace, with skylights down to the drafting room below, and behind this sunken section, to a raised library with stairs up to a small rooftop deck. The third floor contains the master bedroom on the back, with the wall bowing out in an S-curve on this north-facing wall to capture the sun. At the top the living space extends from front to back. Characteristic of much modern American work of the period, there is restraint, but nothing spartan, about the interiors. No

Thonet chairs here. One thinks rather of the comfort of the club, or the plush spareness of the railroad observation cars of the period. Clumps of low, deep, upholstered furniture are fitted to equally low cabinets and shelving, which in turn are often ingeniously fitted into jogs made by the protrusions of structural columns into the space. The lowness of the furniture and the unbroken expanse of wall-to-wall carpeting emphasize the plane of the floor against the painted plaster expanse of the walls and ceiling. As a result of the restraint, one senses with special intensity, even in a photograph, the resonant play of materials: wood, fabrics, metal, plastic, glass, plaster, and paint, as well as plants, bouquets of flowers, and their shadows on the wall (fig. 15). The Lescaze living room was in beige, dark brown, daffodil yellow and creamy white—club colors combined with pastels into something more ethereal. On the cool side Lescaze selected sky blue (PSFS blue, one might say) and oyster with maroon and chartreuse accents, which were interior colors also favored at the time. His inclusion of a fireplace in this room reminds us that, however subdued and often dismantled, fireplaces generally remained prominent in modern American interiors. Concealed lighting (hidden in coves, ledges, and "indirect" lighting fixtures) came into its own, often positioned so as to conceal the invasion of spanning beams into the space, as furniture was fitted to columns. In the Norman house, just such concealed lighting, occurring behind a wall within a wall, lights a shelf for paintings and photographs—Stieglitz photographs, in fact, since Dorothy Norman was a devotee of Stieglitz and the American Place and wrote essays and a book on the photographer.[14] In the foreground of the Lescaze living room, the long metal plate with its line of buttons testifies to the theatrical effects possible from the washes of concealed light and their sometime (apparently not here) rheostat control; this was at a time when theater and store display lighting was being revolutionized.

Lescaze's townhouse typifies a Modern Architecture which thrusts in many directions. The free-wheeling use of the gamut of modern stylisms; the complication and explosion of the *prism pur* into massing

14. An intimate of Stieglitz, Dorothy Norman published an essay on him in Waldo Frank, et al., *America and Alfred Stieglitz* (New York: Doubleday, Doran, 1934) and a more definitive study *Alfred Stieglitz: An American Seer* (New York: Random House, 1973). Her writings also include, in addition to other items on Stieglitz and privately printed volumes, two books: *Nehru, the First Sixty Years* (New York: John Day, 1965) and *The Hero: Myth, Image, Symbol* (New York: World Publishing, 1969).

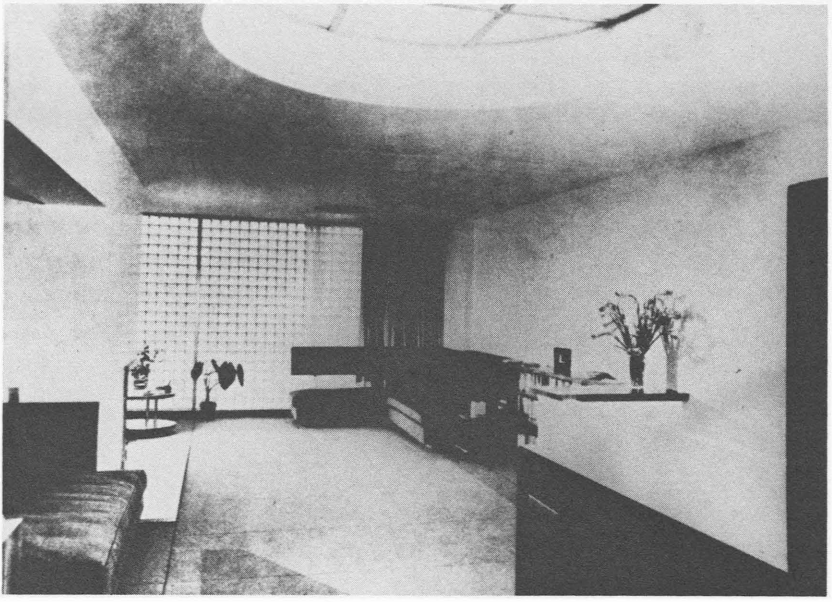


Fig. 15. William Lescaze Townhouse, New York, New York, 1933-34, William Lescaze, Living room.

which is variously functional, picturesque, and ornamental; the rub of the vernacular against sophistication; the creation of architectural images for the American liberal sensibility coming to grips with "modernity": these are aspects of Lescaze's personal involvement with the modern European style and the restless, inventive, empirical manner in which he attempted to inflect it to his own expression in the context of American culture. Sometimes he was successful, sometimes less so; but there is about this work of the thirties a spirit of discovery and adventure which seems to have dwindled as the style became more familiar, the solutions more *pro forma*, and (quite as important, it would seem) the progressive spirit and marked individuality of Lescaze's early clients inevitably gave way to more conventional and more commercial patronage. After all, the excitement of the discovery of Modern Architecture in the thirties was the client's as well as the architect's. The architecture which resulted reveals their shared enthusiasm.

The portrait photograph [see page 15] which serves as the poster image to this exhibition was taken in the Lescaze living room. Nattily attired, Lescaze leans on the cantilevered projection of the back of the sofa, against the crystalline geometry of the glass brick. Silhouetted plant leaves

poke in from the left. Light, geometry, the cantilever, an emblem of the "organic"—all signs of the "modern". Lescaze sucks on the pipe of professional meditation—the final *objet type* in *Vers une architecture*, laid across the page as an image of finality. He reads a current architectural journal. A sharper print of the photograph will reveal that the open page shows a plan (not apparently of one of his own buildings, as one might suspect). One would like to think at least that the journal contains the latest from Europe. And Lescaze may be wondering how he can appropriate it and bend it to new use on another continent.

A Brief Survey of Architectural Holdings at the Syracuse University Libraries

BY WERNER SELIGMANN

In 1928, Henry-Russell Hitchcock published a series of articles on the then novel topic of Modern Architecture. In these articles he tried to lay out a picture of the people and the movements which would shape the evolution of twentieth-century American architecture. Hitchcock established two basic categories among the world's progressive architects at that moment: The New Traditionalists and the New Pioneers.

To Hitchcock, the New Tradition was a gentle break from the past:

> The New Traditionalists are retrospective in their tendency to borrow freely from the past but they are also modern in that they feel free to use and combine without regard for archaeological properties the elements thus borrowed. . . . The freedom of their principles makes it possible to provide solutions harmonious with, but not borrowed from the past, to the endless new building problems which the last fifty years have presented.[1]

Frank Lloyd Wright was seen as the ideal American figure within the New Tradition, following on the heels of Sullivan and Richardson, along with Berlage, Saarinen, Hoffmann, Perret, and others in Europe. There were other American architects as well — such as the New York and Chicago skyscraper architects of the 1920s and 1930s — who could be placed within this classification, although Hitchcock was reluctant to address these architects' work in any serious way. However, other critics such as Lewis Mumford were describing architects such as Ralph Walker, Ely Jacques Kahn, and Raymond Hood along lines similar to Hitchcock's New Tradition.

> The able young men . . . are in revolt. They are nauseated by acanthus leaves, and they know that if they pull down the stone columns the modern building, unlike the temple of the

1. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., "Modern Architecture; 1. The Traditionalists and the New Tradition", *Architectural Record* 63 (April 1928): 340-41.

> Philistines that Samson destroyed, will remain standing. . . . We need a direct, simple, inevitable vernacular architecture for our great buildings; . . . the earlier skyscrapers in Chicago did this . . . and our present efforts here (in New York) mean, I think, that we are again at a hopeful point of departure.[2]

The New Pioneers were, in contrast, making a dramatic break from the past:

> [They] insist that tradition must not restrain architecture from taking advantage of the latest engineering possibilities. . . . Architecture for the New Pioneers is the disposition of masses, volumes, and surfaces in geometrically significant forms according to the creative inspiration of the designer.[3]

Hitchcock saw the New Pioneers as almost purely a European phenomenon. In America, as he stated, "only one or two architects—although very great ones—have until very lately made a conscious cult of what is called 'modernism'."[4] It was clear, then as now, that Hitchcock was an advocate for the New Pioneers, that he saw himself as a publicist and polemicist in America for the work of Europe's leading avant-garde designers. Through Hitchcock's critical commentary, as well as through the unprecedented forms which the New Pioneer architects were creating, the new group gradually assumed center stage in American architecture. When Hitchcock first began reporting on the newcomers, they were a minor force. Quickly, though, they took on an equal footing with the New Traditionalists. Eventually, the New Pioneers would succeed in eclipsing the work and careers of the New Traditionlists.

Today, the equal footing is re-emerging. Historians are increasingly interested in the indigenous modern traditions of American architecture. Syracuse University's architectural collections provide a unique opportunity for the scholar because they document the work of architects on both sides of this discussion. Within the collection are the design records and personal papers of architects whose names are synonymous with twentieth-century international avant-gardism, along

2. Lewis Mumford, "American Architecture Today", *Architecture* 57 (April 1928): 181-82.

3. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr. "Modern Architecture; II. The New Pioneers", *Architectural Record* 63 (May 1928): 454.

4. Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Jr., "Modern Architecture; I. The Traditionalists and the New Tradition", *Architectural Record* 63 (April 1928): 337.

with those of long-neglected but suddenly re-emergent practitioners of Hitchcock's New Tradition.

In past years these interesting collections have received only limited scholarly attention, to some extent because it has been difficult to find financial resources for fully surveying and cataloguing them. As a result, the School of Architecture and the Syracuse University Libraries have set out on a long-term program of focused projects to bring to the public's attention the value of these materials.

We begin this effort with one of our most complete collections. The Lescaze papers at Syracuse's George Arents Research Library contain his personal and business records relating to his fifty-year career as an architect. The major portion of the collection consists of his job files, which document the design process on virtually every commission that Lescaze received. Most projects can be followed from earliest sketches, through technical drawings, to photographs of the finished work.

Lescaze's career is particularly interesting in regard to the discussion of the New Pioneers versus the New Tradition. The Lescaze materials, and indeed Lescaze himself, represent a rare bridge between these worlds which historians have set in opposition for so long. Lescaze was one of a very few American architects whose work fits comfortably within Hitchcock's definition of avant-garde design. As a result, Lescaze's work was enthusiastically published in the principal polemic of the New Pioneers in America: Hitchcock and Johnson's book, *The International Style*. At the same time, Lescaze's conception of Modern Architecture was influenced by the professional and artistic climate of the United States, where new ideas were more likely to be incorporated into culture along the lines of Hitchcock's New Tradition. In fact, this bridging identity is reinforced in Lescaze's partnership with George Howe. Rare indeed are partnerships between major traditional and avant-garde figures. Our exhibition and symposium on Lescaze's work examine what results when these sensibilities are brought forcefully into contact with each other; this issue of the *Courier* records the current scholarly discussion for future reference.

After beginning with this unique bridge figure, our attention moves toward the twentieth-century architects who represent more directly the opposing forces which have driven the progress of American architecture. Syracuse University holds major collections which support study of both the early avant-garde architects of this country, and those who

set out to modernize existing traditions of form.

The largest collection within the New Tradition group consists of the personal library and papers of Ralph Walker; as with Lescaze, we hold his entire personal archive. From his long career we have important documents relating to several projects such as the Irving Trust and Fuller Buildings in New York City. We have studies by Walker for the 1933 "Century of Progress" Exposition in Chicago. Moreover, we have documentation of his long and productive association with the New York Telephone Company, for whom Walker functioned as both image maker and facilities planner during the 1920s and 1930s. Out of this association emerged Walker's most famous work, the Barclay-Vesey Building, along with other significant buildings in virtually every city in New York. Also, there are probably some important research "finds" to be discovered in this as yet loosely catalogued collection. In addition, Syracuse University benefited from Mr. Walker's generosity in receiving his entire personal library. This collection of books and periodicals not only sheds light on Walker's lively interest in the arts; it also includes first editions of many important books and publications which are now in the Library's Rare Book Division. For instance, Walker's library included a copy of Christian Zervos' *Pablo Picasso* set, *Drawings for a Living Architecture* by Frank Lloyd Wright, and the limited run periodical *The Minotaur.*

Syracuse University's collections also contain materials from several other important New York City skyscraper architects. One of these is Max Abramowitz, of the firm Harrison and Abramowitz. Included in his papers are a number of sketches for the New York World's Fair of 1939, which was master-planned by Harrison and Abramowitz. Also represented is the architect Robert Jacobs, partner of Ely Jacques Kahn and another important American practitioner of the New Tradition. The firm of Kahn and Jacobs has provided the New York skyline with some of its most characteristic images. Among Mr. Jacob's papers is a photographic record of his work dating from 1918 to 1949, which includes such projects as the Bergdorf-Goodman store building, the Van Cleef and Arpels building, and the original Bonwit Teller building.

Two other architects in the collection, whose work places them among the New Traditionalists, are Lorimer Rich and Aymar Embury II. Rich is best known for his first major project: the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, from 1929. After the completion of this monument, he went on to become a pro-

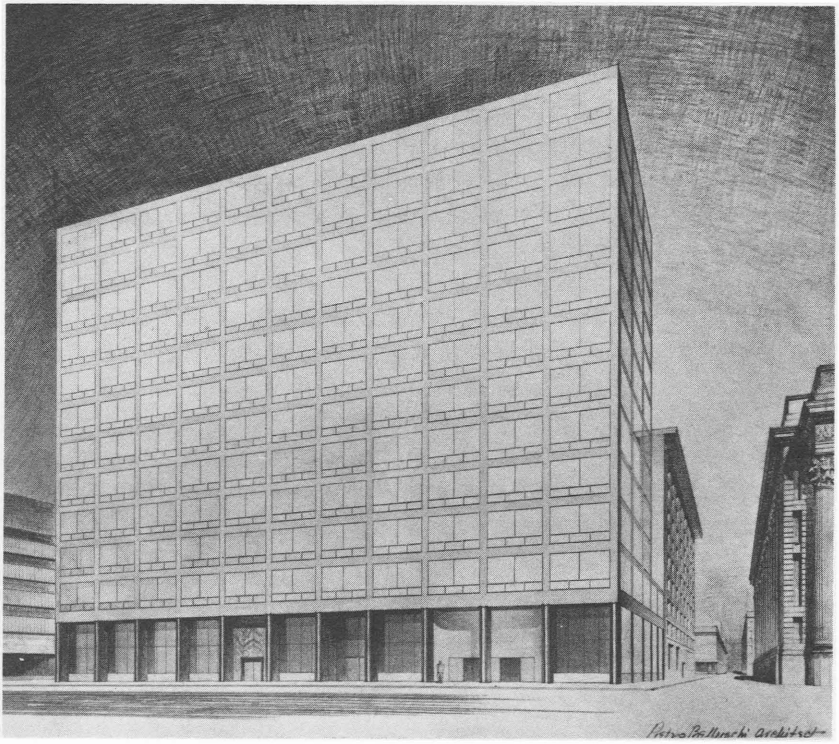
lific designer of institutional, governmental, and university buildings. Like many of the tradition-oriented architects of his time, he eventually made a dramatic conversion to Modern Architecture. This extensive collection documents that shift and thus gives us a picture of the changes occurring in the profession during Rich's career. Aymar Embury's papers document both writings and design works by an architect whose interests were exceptionally broad—technically progressive and yet intensely concerned with traditional sources of form. Embury's work is represented in all its breadth, ranging from an important 1911 publication, *The Dutch Colonial House*, to photographs and technical drawings of his many suspension bridges such as the Triborough and the Verrazano-Narrows.

The centerpiece of the New Pioneers group within our archives is a collection of the drawings and papers of the architect Marcel Breuer. Breuer's importance as a primary figure in the rise of modern design is well established through his seminal furniture designs at the Bauhaus, his academic and professional associations with Walter Gropius, and his architecture in both Europe and the United States. The materials in Syracuse University's collection span the years 1934-1953 and contain virtually all of the survivng drawings, correspondence, and photographs prior to 1951. These papers are an especially important resource, for two reasons. First, most of Breuer's earlier papers from Europe have been destroyed. Second, the years represented in the Syracuse University collections are those during which Hitchcock's New Pioneers were arriving in America, establishing themselves, and gradually assuming leadership positions in the profession. Since Breuer was a principal figure in this group, it is particularly interesting to follow his early American years through the materials held here.

Within this extensive collection are numerous letters and contracts, along with pencil sketches, photographs, and thousands of drawings. The collection documents such important projects as the proposal for Black Mountain College in North Carolina, his early houses, the exhibition house at the Museum of Modern Art, and the Yankee Portables house. These materials still await serious scholarly attention, yet they are an invaluable resource for examining not only Breuer himself, but also the era in which he played such a telling role.

Another of the early American modernists represented in the collection is Pietro Belluschi. Like most of these architects, Belluschi was born abroad. However, he was educated in this country, worked here,

and was Dean of the architecture school at MIT from 1951 to 1965. His papers include many sketches, drawings, and photographs, along with his own writings, covering a period from 1908 to 1964. Among the works documented in the archive are Belluschi's Unitarian Society May Memorial in Syracuse, and the Equitable Building in Portland, Oregon. The Equitable Building is recognized as one of the most significant and influential post-World War II office buildings. A photographic survey, drawn in part from the Pietro Belluschi holdings at Syracuse, is scheduled for publication in September 1984. This book, entitled "Frozen Music: A History of Portland Architecture" (Western Imprints, The Press of the Oregon Historical Society), is by Gideon Bosker and Lena Lencek.



Pietro Belluschi,
Equitable Savings and Loan Co. Building,
Portland, Oregon, 1947, Rendering
(Pietro Belluschi Papers, George
Arents Research Library).

While Syracuse University's architectural materials clearly are of interest related to this discussion of American sources of Modern Architecture, our collections also are of significance to historians in other ways. For instance, the regional history of architecture in upstate New York continues to generate scholarly interest. As one of the oldest schools of architecture in the country, Syracuse University has had a deep and continuing role in this regional history. The University has educated the majority of architects who practise in the region, and professors in the School of Architecture have designed buildings which have helped to shape the region's communities. The University's archival collections have become not only the major repository for the record of local architecture, but also a focus and foundation of research into our region's design history.

We hope that the regional materials which exist at Syracuse University, rich as they are, are only the core of an ever-growing resource. Several significant collections have been added in recent years, and we hope that this trend will continue. For example, it was only four years ago that the papers of one of Syracuse's most important architects, Archimedes Russell, came to the University. Russell, who taught at Syracuse's architecture school, moved from Boston to open his office here in 1868. The firm he founded still exists in Syracuse. The Russell archive contains several hundred original drawings, along with business records. Included in this extensive collection are drawings for Crouse College on the Syracuse University campus, the Crouse Stables, the Yates Hotel, and numerous others. This collection was made use of a few years ago for a major exhibition, which was the topic of an issue of the *Courier* at that time.

Dwight James Baum was an early graduate of Syracuse University's architecture program, who returned in collaboration with John Russel Pope to masterplan the campus and to design Hendricks Chapel and the Maxwell School of Citizenship. Baum also was a scholar of Georgian architecture. The Baum collection includes a large-format photographic survey of his work, along with some drawings.

Two longtime Syracuse University professors, Frederick A. Lear and Harley J. McKee, added depth to the regional architecture archives by the donation of their papers. Lear, who was an alumnus of the School, is represented by his teaching files along with extensive sketchbooks and design records. Among his design records are original drawings for a number of the best-known church buildings in Central New

York. Harley McKee was an architectural historian and one of the earliest active preservationists. His collection includes drawings by other architects such as Ward Wellington Ward, and McKim, Mead and White. Also included are measured drawings of buildings throughout the country, which record McKee's long association with the Historic American Buildings Survey. McKee's files, notes and unpublished lectures on the architecture of our region are an uncatalogued resource of tremendous potential value.

The Syracuse University George Arents Research Library for Special Collections provides an exceptional facility for serious historical study of the evolution of American architecture. The School of Architecture, with the cooperation of the Syracuse University Libraries, hopes to continue a systematic process of scholarly use of the collections. The current focus of interest on William Lescaze sheds light on our society's first ventures into abstract Modern Architecture. It is our hope to follow up these efforts with a serious look at the next historical moment, when the first generation of modern architects from Europe — the main body of Hitchcock's New Pioneers — came to America and injected abstract design issues into the mainstream of architectural thought. This future endeavor will catalogue and make public the Breuer materials. Gradually we hope to find the financial means, on a project-by-project basis, to make Syracuse University's architectural collections into an accessible and widely recognized record of design knowledge.

The assistance of Barbara Opar, Architecture Bibliographer, Syracuse University Libraries, and Robert B. Dean, Curator of the Lescaze exhibition, are gratefully acknowledged in the preparation of this article.

NEWS OF THE LIBRARY AND LIBRARY ASSOCIATES

Spring Luncheon Meeting

On May 4, 1984 the Syracuse University Library Associates held their annual spring luncheon in the 1916 Room. At this meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Soling, the Post-Standard Award, an engraved silver bowl, was presented by Joanne Dennis, Director of Community Relations for Syracuse Newspapers, to Henry S. Bannister. The citation follows:

> HENRY S. BANNISTER, your entire career, since before graduation from Cornell University and service in the United States Army, has been dedicated to the world of books and literature. An active collector since the Golden Thirties (when prices were right), you were also for many years travelling about the country as a representative of publishing house distributors.
>
> You were first elected to the Board of Trustees of Syracuse University Library Associates in 1972 and served as its Chairman from 1979 to 1983. During your tenure you were a staunch advocate of the Associates' original purposes as conceived by Chancellor Tolley and were instrumental in further defining the organization's aims and programs. Your efforts in encouraging the Associates in their special projects and publications and in establishing a permanent endowment are especially noteworthy.
>
> But your service to Syracuse University did not exhaust your bookish pursuits. You have been an active participant in the affairs of the Book Club of California, The Grolier Club of New York City, Cornell University Library Associates, and the Gleeson Library Associates of the University of San Francisco.
>
> Your extensive collection of Donn Byrne resulted in the publication of your definitive bibliography of that author; and you are now embarked on the preparation of a greatly enlarged catalogue of the 125-year output of the famous Albany publishers, Joel Munsell and Son.

Above all, we shall treasure the memory of the gracious hospitality which you and Olive extended to book-lovers at your Riverview Farm home.

In recognition of your many services and contributions to the Syracuse University Libraries, it is fitting that you have been selected as the recipient of the Post-Standard Award for 1984.

Following the luncheon and the presentation, Professor Emeritus William C. Fleming gave an illustrated lecture entitled: "Music and Architecture: a Harmonious Relationship". The theme was an intriguing one, perhaps clarified best in Professor Fleming's own words. "Both music and architecture are based on numbers, rhythm, and measure. One unfolds in time, the other in space. When the ancient Greeks uncovered the mathematic proportions of the vibrating string, they thought it was the key that unlocked the secrets of the universe. Ever since, musicians and architects have been trying to harmonize musical and visual proportions."

Recent Gifts of the Library Associates

In August of 1961, a visitor to Lambaréné made a suggestion to Dr. Albert Schweitzer. The exact wording of the suggestion is unknown, but it saw fruition in a slim volume titled *Teaching the Reverence for Life*, translated by Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1965).

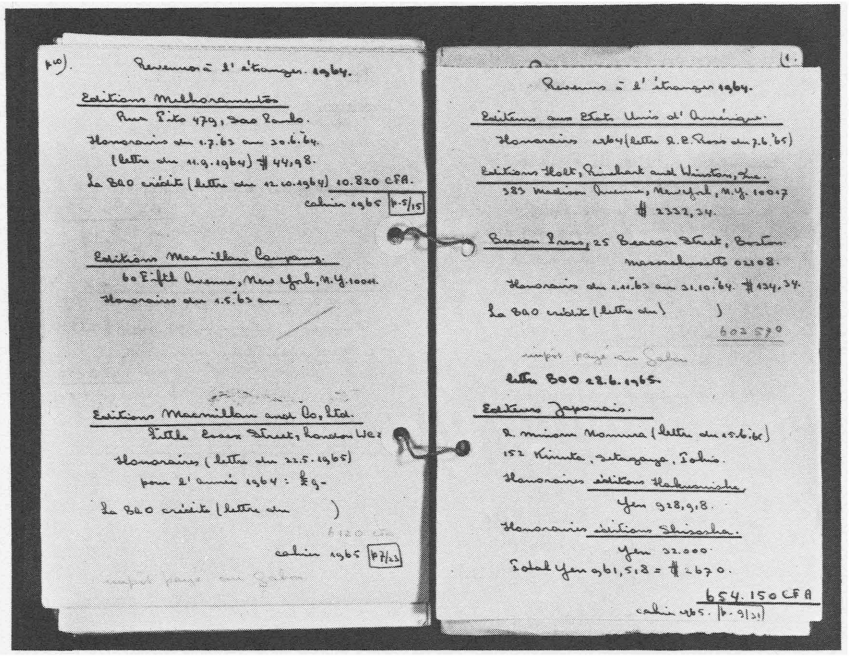
Six essays pertaining to ethics, man, peace, and atomic war appear in this book. The final essay, "An End to Atomic Weapons", is of particular interest because of a recent gift by the Library Associates to the George Arents Research Library—that of Schweitzer's dated and signed first draft of this essay.

The manuscript, in German, runs to six pages and is heavily corrected, sometimes in ink, sometimes in pencil. Dr. Schweitzer has used the verso of a mimeographed newsletter (French and undated), putting one in mind of other historical statements which first were penned, not upon parchment or rag paper, but upon the most humble and near-at-hand scraps.

Schweitzer's title is "Los von Unmenschlichkeit, Los von den Atomwaffen". The manuscript is available to scholars for research and study.

The companion Schweitzer gift made at the same time by Library Associates consists of two manuscript account books for the years 1940 to 1965, which show the income received by Schweitzer. Most revenues are from the publication of his books, in France, Germany, Italy, England, and Sweden. Very few of the records indicate monies received for medical services. These volumes are of particular interest to any student of Schweitzer's publishing history.

Carolyn A. Davis
Manuscripts Librarian


Recettes à l'étranger 1964.

Editions Melbourne Rua Pito 479, Sao Paulo.
Honoraires du 1.7.63 au 30.6.64.
(lettre du 11.9.1964) ₦ 44,98.
Le BAO crédite (lettre du 12.10.1964) 10.820 CFA.
calcul 1965 [P.5/15]

Editions Macmillan Company
60 Fifth Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10011.
Honoraires du 1.5.63 au

Editions Macmillan and Co, Ltd.
Little Essex Street, London WC2
Honoraires (lettre du 22.5.1965)
pour l'année 1964 : £9-
Le BAO crédite (lettre du)
calcul 1965 [P7/13]

Recettes à l'étranger 1964.

Editions aux Etats Unis d'Amérique.
Honoraires 1964 (lettre R.B. Perrin du 7.6.'65)

Editions Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc.
383 Madison Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017
₦ 2332,24.

Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston Massachusetts 02108.
Honoraires du 1.11.'63 au 31.10.'64. ₦ 134,34.
Le BAO crédite (lettre du)
602 CFA

Editions Japonais.
A Misawa Momma (lettre du 10.6.'65)
152 Kimuta, Setagaya, Tokio.
Honoraires éditions Hakuyosha
Yen 928,9,8.
Honoraires éditions Shinsaka.
Yen 22.000.
Total Yen 950,9,8 = ₦ 2670.
654.150 CFA
calcul 1965. [P.9/21]

Albert Schweitzer's account book showing receipts from his publishers, 1964.

During the past year the following rare books were given by the Library Associates to the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections.

Hunter, Dard. *The life work of Dard Hunter: a progressive illustrated assemblage of his works as artist, craftsman, author, papermaker and printer.* (Chillicothe, Ohio, 1981-1983) 2 vols.

More than "eleven years' labour and research" were invested by Hunter's son and namesake in the compilation and printing of this monumental record of his father's work. In addition to the full documentation they provide for Hunter's life, these volumes are fine examples of bookmaking from the family's Mountain House Press. The edition is limited to one hundred fifty copies.

Moorsfield Press. A collection of sixteen of the twenty-seven titles issued by this private press in Champlain, N.Y., between 1919 and 1939. The founder and proprietor of the press, Hugh McLellan, published in limited editions a number of historical manuscripts, letters, and journals which he, his father, and his grandfather had collected. McLellan also printed various documents pertaining to Judge Pliny Moore. Included in the collection is a complete run of McLellan's last publication, *The Moorsfield Antiquarian* (1937-1939).

Noyes, John Humphrey. [Scrapbooks of "Home Talks", "Table Talks", and "Family Talks".] 3 vols.

These volumes were taken from various Oneida Community periodical publications and contain extensive manuscript emendations in the hand of John Humphrey Noyes and his wife, Harriet A. Noyes. The scrapbooks contain detailed notes on the bibliographic history of each essay as it was successively reprinted in different forms and under different titles.

Pound, Ezra. A collection of eight first editions including *Qui pauper amavi, Antheil, Guide to Kulchur, How to read, Exultations, If this be treason,* and *From Syria.*

Rowlandson, Thomas. *The grand master: or Adventures of Qui Hi? in Hindostan . . .* (London, 1816).

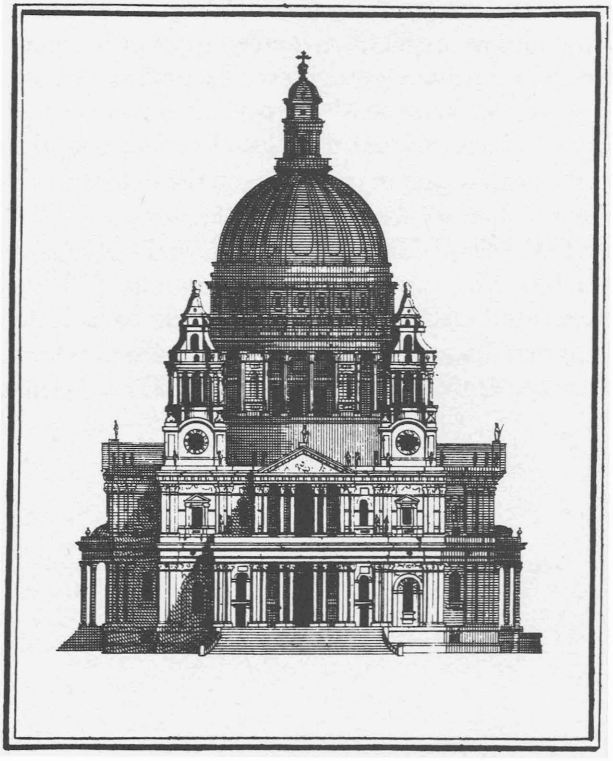
A fierce attack on British rule in India directed against the

Governor-General, Lord Moira, Marquis of Hastings, attributed to William Combe. The work is illustrated with twenty-seven colored aquatints by Rowlandson.

Wren, Christopher. *Parentalia: or, Memoirs of the family of the Wrens.* (London, 1750).

A collection of the Wren family papers edited by Sir Christopher's son and published by his grandson. *Parentalia* is the basic published source for all studies of Wren's life and work and it includes the first appearance of a major part of his known writings on architecture. From the library of the Marquis of Bath at Longleat.

Mark F. Weimer
Rare Book Librarian



St. Paul's Cathedral, as illustrated in the Wren *Parentalia*.

The SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY ASSOCIATES, founded in 1953, is a society whose efforts are devoted to the enhancement of the special collections of the Syracuse University Libraries. The Associates' interests lie in strengthening these collections through the acquisition of unusual books and manuscripts, items which are often so rare and of such value that the Libraries would not otherwise be able to acquire them.

The Library Associates welcome anyone to join whose interests incline in the direction of book collecting or the graphic arts. The perquisites of membership include the use of the Syracuse University Libraries' facilities and resources, as well as invitations to exhibitions, Associates-sponsored lectures, and special events of the University Libraries. In addition, members will receive not only copies of all our incidental publications and typographic keepsakes, but also, semiannually, a copy of the *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, which contains articles related to unusual and interesting aspects of the Libraries' holdings, and in particular, to the holdings of the George Arents Research Library for Special Collections.

SUGGESTED MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS are as follows: full membership, $30; introductory membership, $20; student and senior citizen membership, $10. Checks made payable to Syracuse University Library Associates should be sent to the Secretary, 600 Bird Library, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13210. Telephone (315) 423-2585.